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# THE CHURCHES AND MODERN THOUGHT

## AN INQUIRY INTO THE GROUNDS OF UNBELIEF AND AN APPEAL FOR CANDOUR

BY

PHILIP VIVIAN

67105

"Men are never so likely to settle a question rightly as when they discuss it freely."—MACAULAY.

LONDON:

WATTS & CO.,

17, JOHNSON'S COURT, FLEET STREET, E.C.

1911

TO

MY WIFE AND CHILDREN

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*An edition of this book is issued in cloth at 1s. 6d. net, and another on superior paper, gilt lettered, at 3s. 6d. net.*

## PREFACE TO FIRST EDITION

WHAT does a man seek when he examines his religious creed? To this question Canon Liddon replies as follows:—"He seeks intellectual satisfaction and moral support. His intellect asks for reliable information upon certain subjects of the most momentous importance. How does he come here? Whither is he going? What is the purpose and drift of the various forms of existence around him? Above all, what is the nature, what are the attributes and dispositions, of that Being to whom the highest yearnings of his inmost self constantly point as the true object of his existence? In asking that the answers to these questions shall be definite, that what is certain shall be affirmed as certain, what is doubtful as doubtful, what is false as false, he is only asking that his religious information shall be presented in as clear and practical a shape as his information on other subjects. In no department of human knowledge is haziness deemed a merit; by nothing is an educated mind more distinguished than by a resolute effort to mark the exact frontiers of its knowledge and its ignorance; to hesitate only when hesitation is necessary; to despair of knowledge only when knowledge is ascertainably out of reach. Surely on the highest and most momentous of all subjects this same precision may be asked for with reverence and in reason; surely the human mind is not bound to forget its noblest instincts when it approaches the throne and presence of its Maker?" (*Some Elements of Religion*, p. 24).

Again, in his New Year's message for 1905, the Archbishop of Canterbury condemns indifference to truth as

a vice, and "drifting along the current of popular opinion" as a sin. He invites and persuades us to use "the sadly-neglected powers and privileges of rational thought and common sense."

The duty of thinking, therefore, is now recognised by the Church—it was not formerly. But what will be the result of this thinking? In his book, *The Hearts of Men*, Mr. Fielding tells us that "no man has ever sat down calmly unbiassed to reason out his religion, and not ended by rejecting it." Mr. Fielding adds: "The great men, who have been always religious, do not invalidate what I say.....There is no assumption more fallacious than that, because a man is a keen reasoner on one subject, he is also on another. Men who are strictly religious, who believe in their faith, whatever their faith may be, consider it above proof, beyond argument.....It is emotion, not reason; feeling, not induction." (*The Hearts of Men*, pp. 142–3.)

Does not this deep and sympathetic writer furnish us with a true picture of men's hearts? What if, after exercising their privileges of rational thought and common sense, the majority of men find that Christianity no longer gives them either intellectual satisfaction or moral support? What if they finally arrive at the conclusion that Christianity and all supernatural beliefs are but the survival of primitive superstitions which can no longer bear the light of modern knowledge? These are the grave questions which now confront us.

A man may enter, and generally does enter, upon his inquiry biassed in favour of religious belief of some kind. He approaches the subject in a reverent frame of mind. In his private prayers to his God he does not neglect to ask for heavenly guidance. He evinces precisely the spirit which a divine would consider becoming. But as his inquiry proceeds there comes a time when his religious bias disappears—when he can no longer feel what he

could honestly call reverence. He discovers that what he thought was known, and had actually been revealed, is unknown. How can he believe in and worship the Unknown? More than ever he feels his own insignificance and ignorance; but the feeling thus excited, while akin to awe, is divested of reverence. Pursuing his search far enough, he succeeds in extricating himself from a quagmire of demonstrably false superstitions. Finally he reaches solid ground, and builds his life upon it.

Unfortunately, many never pursue their inquiry up to this stage; they become fearful, or they give it up as a hopeless entanglement, or they find they have not the requisite leisure. Perhaps, therefore, the information gained by one of the more fortunate may be of some little service to others. It will be my endeavour to set forth in this book not only the destructive, but also the constructive, results of a search for truth.

P. V.

*January, 1906.*

## PREFACE TO SECOND EDITION

"This book," writes one of its clerical critics,[1] "is evidently the honest, outspoken opinion of one who, having been brought up in an unquestioning acceptance of the orthodox doctrines of Christianity, has gradually drifted into the extreme of Rationalism." Up to a certain point my friend is right. I was indeed brought up in an unquestioning acceptance of the orthodox teachings of Christianity; but, while my conversion to Rationalism has certainly been

[1] In the June (1903) number of *Review of Theology and Philosophy*, edited by Professor Allan Menzies, D.D.

gradual, I may fairly claim that the process has been something very different from merely drifting. Long and careful study, the reluctant abandonment of a cherished belief, the adoption of an attitude which is unpopular and which distresses many who are near and dear to me, the practical application of the principles of Rationalism to daily life, involving as it does the serious step of bringing up my children in strict accordance with my firm convictions—these are surely not the ways of one who has permitted himself to drift. A man might—he often does—drift into indifferentism, or, now that theology is so liberal and heterodoxy so rife, into latitudinarianism, but hardly into "the extreme of Rationalism."

* * * *

I take this opportunity of cordially thanking all who have assisted me, and specially I have to thank Mr. Joseph McCabe and Dr. H. D. R. Kingston for reading the MS. and the proofs in all their stages, and for pointing out verbal inaccuracies and suggesting improvements both in the matter and in the manner of presenting it. I am also much indebted to a lady, who does not wish her name to appear, for lightening the task of proof correction.

P. V.

*January, 1907.*

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## PREFACE TO THIRD EDITION

THE present edition consists of 10,000 copies, bringing the total issue to 31,000. Apart from a few alterations in the chapter dealing with ancient beliefs, the work is unchanged.

P. V.

*April, 1911.*

# THE SITUATION

## Chapter I.

## THE GRAVITY OF THE PRESENT SITUATION

### § 1. *The Truth of the Matter.*

Before entering upon an inquiry into religious unbelief, we need to form a correct estimate of its prevalence. If, as many would have us think, there is nothing unusual in the present situation—if the age of faith is returning,[1] it is hardly worth while to enter upon this inquiry at all. If, on the other hand, the forces hostile to the Christian faith differ essentially from those that stirred up waves of scepticism in the past—if there is overwhelming evidence that belief among educated men is fast decaying, it is surely high time to investigate the grounds of unbelief, and to welcome the fullest discussion concerning the best means of dealing with an entirely new and extremely grave situation. It is only the shortest-sighted policy that would shelve a disagreeable question until mischief had occurred. It is better to face the facts. From every point of view, concealment regarding a question of such vital importance as the truth of Christianity is to be deplored; while an attitude of indifference on a subject that should be of surpassing interest to us all can only be characterised as amazing—unless, indeed, the real explanation be that men have ceased to believe.

[1] As the Rev. John A. Hutton attempts to show in the *Hibbert Journal*, July, 1905.

We must, then, determine, in the first place, whether we are witnessing simply a wave of scepticism that will shortly subside again, or whether the present situation in the religious world is altogether unprecedented. The truth of the matter will best be learnt from the lips of those to whom pessimistic admissions must be peculiarly distressing, and who would therefore be the last either to raise a false alarm or to be guilty of an exaggeration. The Bishop of London has warned us[1] that "the truth of the matter really is that all over Europe a great conflict is being fought between the old faith in a supernatural revelation and a growing disbelief in it." The Bishop of Salisbury lately[2] said: "There has been revealed to us the terrible and painful fact that a great many are giving up public worship, and that a large proportion of the people of England pay little attention to religion at all." Not long ago Lord Hugh Cecil expressed[3] the same opinion in the following words: "On all sides there are signs of the decay of the Faith. People do not go to church, or, if they go, it is for the sake of the music, or for some non-religious motive. The evidence is overwhelming that the doctrines of Christianity have passed into the region of doubt." From Dr. Horton we learn that "vast numbers of people in England to-day have forsaken the best and highest ideal of life known to them before they have found a better and higher..... While Professor Haeckel and Professor Ray Lankester

[1] In his address at the London Diocesan Conference in April, 1904.
[2] When addressing a conference of clergy and church-workers at Blandford on September 7th, 1905.
[3] In the course of one of those remarkable orations of his which always command the thoughtful attention of the House. The speech was reported in the newspapers of March 15th, 1904.

do in their way offer an alternative, and present to us the solution of the great enigma according to their light, the bulk of people in our day surrender the old and tried ideal, fling it aside, assume that it is discredited, live without it, and make no serious attempt to find a better ideal."[1]

Are there not indications, moreover, everywhere in the literature of the day? The works of some of our greatest scholars are either covertly or openly agnostic. The more thoughtful of our magazines, such as the *Nineteenth Century*, *Fortnightly Review*, *Hibbert Journal*, *Independent Review*, etc., are continually publishing articles which teem with heterodoxy. The "Do We Believe?" correspondence in the *Daily Telegraph* (not to mention the more recent controversies in the *Standard*, *Daily Mail*, and *Daily News*) was without precedent, and highly significant of the present state of religious unrest. In a lecture reported in the *Tablet*, Father Gerard voiced the growing feeling of apprehension when he referred to the "Do We Believe?" controversy and the "amazing success" of the Rationalist Press Association as indicating a situation of "the utmost gravity, as gravely disquieting as any with which in her long career the Church has ever been confronted." Also it may be noticed that organised efforts have commenced all over England to answer inquiries concerning the truth of Christianity by means of apologetic literature and lectures. What do these inquiries portend? The reply is given in the warning of the Rev. Mark Pattison in his essay on "Tendencies of Religious Thought in England." "When an age," he says, "is

[1] See Dr. Horton's letter to the *Daily News*, August 23rd, 1905.

found occupied in proving its creed, this is but a token that the age has ceased to have a proper belief in it."

Whichever way we turn the same spectacle confronts us. In France especially, and also in Sweden, Denmark, Germany, Holland, Belgium, Italy, Spain, the United States, Nicaragua, Ecuador, Brazil, and Argentina (where the *men* are practically all agnostics), freethought is making rapid progress. Only in Russia, where ninety per cent. of the population are uneducated, is the growth small and confined to the "intellectuals." Never in the world's history has there been so much disbelief in the "supernatural"; and, with the advance of science and education, this disbelief appears likely to be one day almost universal. Militant Rationalism is jubilant; while the pastor of the Theistic Church[1] proclaims: "I see a battle coming. I do not, like Froude, predict that it will be fought once more, as of old, in blood and tears; but I am as certain as I am of to-morrow's dawn that a mighty conflict is at hand which will revolutionise the religious thought and feeling of Christendom."

It is sheer folly for the Church to comfort herself with the reflection that this is not the first time in the history of Christianity that disbelief has manifested itself. In the early days of the Church the heretic was not in possession of the knowledge that we have since acquired. He could not support his views, as he can now, with the facts of science. At every step he could be met by arguments which he had no adequate means of refuting, and if he dared to deny the "supernatural" there was an enormous preponderance of public opinion against him. Indeed, he

[1] The Rev. Charles Voysey, in a sermon preached at the Theistic Church, Swallow Street, on February 5th, 1905.

himself generally believed in the "supernatural," though he was sceptical of the particular evidence of it on which Christianity had been founded. Retarded by Christianity itself—or, shall we say, by its interpreters?—knowledge was unable to advance; it receded, and the clock was put back in scientific research. Darkness reigned supreme for over a thousand years. At last the dawn began to break. What was the result? The children of light suffered for their temerity; but their ideas were eventually absorbed, and beliefs were suitably reformed. Thus the Copernican system was gradually accepted, and so were the discoveries which followed, up to fifty years ago. Then, however, the established beliefs received shock after shock in rapid succession—shocks from which they do not yet show any promise of recovering. The myriads of worlds in the processes of birth and death; the vast antiquity of the earth; the long history of man and his animal origin; the reign of natural law, and the consequent discredit of the supernatural; the suspicions aroused by the study of comparative mythology; the difficulties of "literal inspiration"; the doubt thrown by the Higher Criticism on many cherished beliefs—these and the like have shaken the very foundations of our faith, and are the cause of agnosticism among the vast majority of our leaders of thought and science.

Ecclesiastics, however, with certain notable exceptions, appear to be labouring under the delusion that a reconciliation has taken place of late between Religion and Science, and that the voice of the Higher Criticism has been hushed—at least, they are continually assuring us to this effect. They remain

under this delusion for two reasons. First, because they are more or less ignorant of science and of the preponderating opinion of the scientific world concerning the truth of Christianity. Secondly, because they are lulled into a feeling of security through misconceptions regarding the attitude of the laity. There appears to be the same, or nearly the same, average of religious conformity as heretofore, and the consensus of opinion seems to be all on the side of church and chapel. Any falling off in religious fervour is attributed to sheer carelessness rather than to unbelief. From the days of Huxley until quite lately there have been no attacks upon Christianity worth mentioning. The Churches fail to realise that this religious conformity and goodwill towards the Christian faith has generally no connection whatever with a conviction of the truth of Christianity, and that, where there is this conviction, it is usually among those who are ignorant of the chief causes for suspicion. I propose, therefore, in the first instance, to examine some of the more usual types among the laity. Obviously, in doing so I shall be omitting a great many shades of thought. I shall say very little about the opinions of the genuine believer or of the hopelessly thoughtless, and nothing of the opinions of evil-livers. My object is to set forth the types which are most likely to have been misunderstood by the clergy.

### § 2. *The Attitude of the Laity.*

Let us commence, then, with the sceptical. *They are not inclined, for the present at least, to propagate their views.* Rightly or wrongly, they still hold the popular opinion that, while they themselves can

dispense with belief, the masses cannot. All that is asked of a "cultured" man is that he keep his opinion to himself. He may be an agnostic or —whether he realises it or not—practically an atheist; but he must not think of calling himself by such ugly names. "The uneducated freethinker," our modern philosopher will say, "manifests a Philistine Voltaireanism—a spirit now disapproved by scholars and philosophers, who regard with serious consideration all the manifestations and products of human thought, from the earliest fetichism to the most recent developments of that religious tendency which appears to be a constitutional element in man." Such high thoughts, according to this philosopher, are not for the common herd, who must continue to wallow in their ignorance, feeding on husks, which, however unsuitable for his own refined digestion, will serve well enough to nourish the religious instincts of the masses.

If of a mystical turn of mind, he will tell you that Christianity, like all other religions, may be but a symbol of a great Reality; and this person, though sceptical regarding the Christian dogmas, will possibly consider himself a Christian. Or, again, he may be without any leaning towards mysticism, and merely hold that religion, *if sincere*, is better for the mind than scepticism. "Better a belated and imperfect religion," he will say, "than none at all. The heart has its claims on our consideration as well as the intellect. Study Comte's *General View of Positivism*."

Many agnostics are just as firmly convinced as believers that their country's prosperity is bound up with the Christian belief. This is largely due to their still clinging to the Church's teaching

concerning belief and morals. It is well to remember, however, that the feeling on this point of the average cultured Frenchman or Italian is quite the opposite. The measures now being taken by the French Government against the clergy are based upon the contention that the Church's influence is injurious to the State's welfare; and this feeling has reached such a pitch that Republican employees hardly dare admit their attendance at divine worship. During September, 1904, the Italian Government extended a cordial welcome to a Freethought Congress, and the proceedings were opened by the Minister of Public Instruction. But the average Englishman, be he ever so sure of the falsity of the Christian dogmas, can foresee nothing but immorality and anarchy as the result of the overthrow of Christianity. "*Cui bono?*" "*Quo vadis?*" he cries. "Leave well alone!" "It is easy enough to show that Christianity is false, but what have you to put in its place? What we want now is construction, not criticism and the flogging of a dying creed." He forgets, it seems to me, that people cannot be hoodwinked for ever, and that, as Mr. Froude tells us, the Reformation was brought about by people refusing any longer to believe a lie. In addition to this concern for the public weal, the sceptic is influenced by motives of expediency. He is well aware of the odium he would incur should he proclaim his heterodox views concerning the popular religion. Such publicity might spoil his professional career, be the death-blow of his ambitions, cause him considerable pecuniary loss, alienate the friends he most values, and, worst of all, destroy the happiness of his home life. For these and similar reasons we find, in the case of the half-

believer, that he does not care to verify his doubts, but prefers to leave his opinions vague enough to be able to call himself a broad-minded Christian. Whether half-believing or distinctly agnostic, he usually holds that very common opinion regarding women, children, and religion—that, however little store a man may set by belief, it is wise to encourage it in the women folk, and also to hand over the children to them for their religious instruction. Besides, militant agnosticism is not the fashion. It is looked upon as "bad form," or as smacking of socialism. Indifference is much the easier attitude.

Or, again, the average man is disposed to trust to the progress of science and the ultimate triumph of truth, and sees no reason why he should make any effort towards shortening the period of transition. In his contempt for the efforts of the "lowly born" and indigent secularists, he forgets that the greatest changes in the world's history have been brought about from the smallest beginnings by these very "lower orders" he affects to despise. In our own times, was it not working men who first set in motion a revolution that will eventually reform Russia? Perhaps the commonest attitude of "the man in the street," whatever his manner of belief may be, is one of good-natured indifference—an acquiescence in things as they are. Absence of the critical spirit or of anxious-mindedness, or of both, renders it easy for him to take things as he finds them, much after the manner of his primeval ancestors. His mind will not occupy itself with aught but the present. Naturally, too, he feels very strongly that what appears to make others happy should not be disturbed. In all this he makes various

questionable assumptions, which I am considering in subsequent chapters of this book.

It is unnecessary to refer to the opinions of the militant agnostic, as this type could never be accused of deceiving the Church. However, it may be noted that Mr. Blatchford says, in the *Clarion* of February 3rd, 1905: "So far as I am concerned, I attacked religion because I believe it to be untrue, and because it seems to me to bar the way to liberty and happiness. The attack upon religion is a part of a task I have set myself." There are statesmen and other persons of influence who are as incredulous as Mr. Blatchford regarding the truth of Christianity; but they do not, apparently, hold that Christianity bars the way to liberty and happiness (I give them credit for being ruled by the highest motives), and so the Church has their support. It is a weird arrangement between Unbelief and Belief, which cannot possibly last much longer; meanwhile, it tends to confuse and delay the answer to that gravest of questions: "Is Christianity true?"

Leaving the sceptic, let us examine another extremely common type—the man who is under the impression that he is a Christian, without either being particularly devout or having inquired at all deeply into the grounds of his faith. He is ignorant of the causes for doubt, because he has not had, or has not cared to afford, any time for such matters. I do not refer so much to the masses, who obviously have very little leisure, but to the more leisured and influential classes. Such a man's scientific education, if he ever had any, was broken off early in life. A large proportion of those all-important years of his boyhood were devoted probably to an unwilling study of the "humanities."

His faith is decidedly vague, and according to his own peculiar interpretation, an adjustment between his heavenly aspirations and his earthly inclinations. It has never been thought out, and is not the result of a thorough study of its tenets. He was born and bred a Christian, and all the nicest people he knows are Christians, or he thinks they are. He is, all unconsciously, a social chameleon taking his colour from the conditions in the midst of which he happens to live. He, too, like his heterodox brother, sneers at organised Freethought in this country, because it owes its inception and conduct chiefly to poor and lowly men, forgetting that it was from such a source that the mighty creed of Christendom itself arose. He forgets that the first Christian apostles were mostly working men. If he has heard or read anything of a sceptical nature, he has never stopped to inquire any further into it. He has no idea that the central features of the Bible have been attacked by men of the greatest learning and integrity, with the result that even the defenders of the faith ask for a reverent agnosticism as to the historical circumstances out of which, in the first instance, belief in the resurrection of Jesus Christ arose.[1] Not knowing that the essentials are called in question, he sees no reason to trouble himself about mere details. It is enough for him that he feels sure that there must be some object in our existence, and that there must be a First Cause. It never occurs to him to consider whether his and the Christian conception of God can be reconciled. For him the truth of the Christian dogma is proved sufficiently by the unsatisfying nature of materialism.

[1] See pp. 63–4.

Has he not been taught that he must have faith, and that faith is a feeling of trust divinely implanted, and not needing to be fed on evidences? Is not Christianity the civilising agent of the world, and the origin of all morality and all good works? Does not scepticism lead to atheism? If thought only leads to disbelief in God, he for one is not going to think.

In addition to the now fast dwindling band of sincere and thoughtful Christians there are, of course, many professing religionists who do think a little, a very little, on religious subjects; but the bulk of the male element are absolutely indifferent to the question of religion at all. The average subaltern is as good a sample of the latter type as any other. Speak to him about religion, and he is unutterably bored. A certain amount of church-going forms part of his ordinary round of duties. This is the sum-total of his "religious experiences." For the rest, religion, or any question as to its truth in this or that particular, is, so far as he is concerned, a matter of supreme indifference.

People are usually (though less so now perhaps than formerly) so careful to keep their thoughts about religion to themselves that it is no wonder the Church is ignorant of the extent to which heterodoxy is rife. The colossal hypocrisy which speaks of "the reserve of Englishmen about their religion" needs exposure. Why should there be this dislike to talk upon religion—a religion which, if true, should make all worldly affairs sink into infinitesimal insignificance? Is it from a spirit of reverence, or is it not rather because the interpretations of God's alleged revelation differ so widely that people neither wish to "give themselves away" by stating their own interpretations, nor to hear

the distasteful interpretations of others? If they were perfectly straightforward, they would run the danger both of hurting the feelings and falling in the estimation of their friends.

Sometimes there is a dread of appearing ridiculous, sometimes a dislike of appearing to cant. Yet surely, if we believe what we profess, there is nothing to be ashamed of, and we ought openly to testify to our faith. I can speak from personal experience when I say that the believing heathen of India, whether Hindoos, Mussulmans, or Parsees, have no qualms on this score. They see no necessity for "reserve" in the profession of their faith. They testify to it openly at all times and in all places. It forms, as it ought, an integral part of their every-day life.

This so-called "reserve" is also occasioned by the inability to live up to the ethical ideals demanded by our creed. Men wish neither to be hypocrites nor to be thought hypocrites. It is an inherent fault in Christian ethics that certain portions are not practicable. They are too much dominated by a belief in the near approach of the end of the world. "If we mechanically applied, as rules of conduct, Christ's ideals of temper, we are certain, from common sense, that universal pauperism, lawlessness, and national extinction would follow."[1] Then, again, there is too much of the presumption that all men have an equal chance in the battle against temptations, and too little acknowledgment of the part played by heredity and environment; and thus the root of the evil is overlooked. Also, if we have a

[1] Quoted from *What it is to be a Christian*, a pamphlet written by the Ven. J. M. Wilson, D.D.

strong "conviction of sin," which, according to our spiritual advisers, is essential, and if we cannot hope to shake off the burden of sin by our own unaided endeavours, our moral fibre is liable to be weakened, and we may cease to cultivate the all-important qualities of self-reliance and self-respect. Emerson's advice is far healthier: "The less we have to do with our sins the better."

Whatever the many causes of this "proud reserve" may be, one of the consequences is that we remain in ignorance of our neighbour's beliefs. If people discussed religious matters among themselves, they would make some surprising discoveries. The agnostic would find that "believers" are not the hypocrites he sometimes puts them down to be, for he would learn, to his surprise, that they are supremely ignorant of much that he assumed they would be sure to know. The believer would find that there are many more agnostics than he had ever dreamt there were, and he would also learn that their reason for abandoning belief was of a very different nature from what he had supposed.

When agnostics read the lessons in church, as they frequently do, and when, with their aid and the aid of others in various stages of heterodoxy, congregations in church and chapel on Sunday only amount to twenty-two per cent.[1] of the population, and these chiefly women,[2] what must not be the sum-total of

[1] Eighteen per cent. was the figure given by Bishop Ingram, speaking of "Londoners," in his speech at the annual meeting of the Bishop of London's Fund in 1904; but, according to the strict results of the census, the figure for London is twenty-two or twenty-three per cent. of the total population.

[2] As Mr. Fielding remarks in his book, *The Hearts of Men* (pp. 217–8): "To one coming to Europe after years in the East and visiting churches, nothing is more striking than the enormous preponderance

agnosticism, heterodoxy, and indifference among *men* in this most Christian of nations? The extent of unavowed or unconscious scepticism far exceeds that which is openly avowed or consciously felt. Laxity in keeping the Sabbath is now notoriously on the increase. Nothing can be more sensible than that people who have slaved for six days in the atmosphere of the office, etc., should go off for their "week end's" golf, etc.; but for the clergy to attribute the consequent falling-off in church attendance solely to the extra facilities of travel tempting people to carelessness about religion is to adopt the method of the proverbial ostrich in the desert at the approach of a dreaded enemy. Unbelief and the advance of rationalism are really at the bottom of this new development; for all the carelessness, all the temptations in the world, would not persuade sane people to throw away their claims to eternal happiness by neglecting to worship their God—a God that *demands* this worship. How little do the clergy really know, or attempt to know, of the beliefs of the cultured portion of their congregations! As I write these words I receive, curiously enough, a letter which shows how unusual it is for the pastor to question his flock. The writer of the letter, a lady, says: "Isn't Mr. X (the rector of a certain country parish) a *gauche* man? Mr. Z (an influential parishioner) didn't go to Holy Communion, and so Mr. X asked him if he had been confirmed. Since then Mr. Z goes elsewhere to church." Now, personally, I admire X's courage. What he did

of women there. It is immaterial whether the church be in England or France, whether it be Anglican or Roman Catholic or Dissenter. The result is always the same—women outnumber the men as two to one, as three to one, sometimes as ten to one."

would not be done by the ordinary run of parsons. If they did that sort of thing, they would soon become exceedingly unpopular in the neighbourhood, and lose most of their fashionable and opulent congregation. But they would begin to learn the true state of affairs. They would learn, for instance, that some of the most regular and respectable of the male portion of their congregations were agnostic or heterodox, and that their attendance at divine worship was merely to set a good example to the "lower orders," or to please their women-folk, or for some cause or other utterly unconnected with any desire to worship or any belief in the efficacy of so doing. There is doubtless a great deal to be said in favour of a spirit of toleration which inculcates non-interference with a man's belief; but it all helps to hide the true state of affairs, and is surely overdone when it encourages men to attend a service where they are acting a part and making solemn declarations untruthfully.

There is one more type of person I should include among the many strange buttresses of the Church—namely, the person who refuses point blank to be enlightened. The Churches have been lulled into a sense of security by many causes, but chief among them, perhaps, there stands out the fact that people not only will not take the trouble to inquire into the grounds of their faith, but consider that it would be positively wicked to do any such thing. To such I can only repeat the words of the Rev. J. W. Diggle, now Bishop of Carlisle. "There are," he says, "perhaps, few things, and certainly nothing of similar moment, about which men give themselves so little trouble, and take such little pains, as the ascertainment, by strict examination, of the foundations and

the evidences of their religion. Hence so many religious persons are like children who have not learned things accurately. They are fearful of being questioned, and are out of temper in an examination." However, as an excuse for this timidity—for it is often nothing else—it must be conceded that a deep study of the evidences does, more often than not, end in agnosticism. This gives rise to the serious question: "If it is God who assists us to remain staunch to our creed, why does He so often forsake us, just when we are trying to lead more thoughtful lives and, consequently, study more deeply the faith we profess?" On the one hand, we find that modern agnosticism is not the result of carelessness, but of thoughtfulness. On the other hand, we observe that the Church numbers among some of its firmest adherents not only those who are ignorant through circumstances over which they have no control, or through thoughtlessness, but also those who remain ignorant through fear to inquire.

### § 3. *Christianity and Science not Reconciled.*

Has the Church, then, been deceived in her impression that a reconciliation has taken place between Christianity and Science? Most certainly. I grant that to some extent there exists a patched-up peace. The modern apologist no longer adopts the unwise course of maintaining every strange phenomenon to be miraculous as long as it is unexplained, whereby each advance of physical science used necessarily to be hostile to theology. He even goes further, and says that the Resurrection and all the miracles may be only the manifestation of some law which is as yet beyond the analysis of our short experience. But, as

I shall show later on, the new interpretations tone down hostility in one respect only to raise fresh and greater difficulties in another.

The manner in which misunderstandings occur on the subject of a reconciliation is well seen when we look into one of the Church's most popular arguments in its favour—the appeal to the pronouncement by Lord Kelvin in support of a Creative Power. Lord Kelvin assured the world that modern biologists were "coming to the belief in the existence of a vital principle."[1] That this pronouncement raised a perfect storm of protest in the world of science is wholly ignored by the world of religion. Suppose, however, that the consensus of opinion had been otherwise, what conclusion could we draw? We simply obtain an argument for some form of Theism. The probability of the existence of a Creative Power would not in itself prove the truth of the Christian dogmas, although it would be a very necessary link in the chain of evidence. It is extremely doubtful whether any scientist or philosopher really holds the doctrine of a personal God, certainly not of the anthropomorphic God of Christianity. Let us take Sir Oliver Lodge, for example. He is continually being held up to us by the Church as an instance of a man of science who finds himself able to believe in the supernatural; but does the Church claim him as one of her fold? In the *Hibbert Journal* for April, 1904, he makes out a strong case for the entire re-interpretation of the Christian doctrine, in which,

[1] As a matter of fact, no distinguished leader among modern biologists has come to any such conclusion. People are apt to forget that, while Lord Kelvin is undoubtedly one of the most distinguished living physicists, he is not himself a biologist.

among other dogmas, the Atonement and Virgin-birth are completely surrendered. He has never yet professed belief in a personal God, and seems to question His omnipotence.[1] Again, in a paper which he contributed lately to a book of essays entitled *Ideals of Science*, he owns that science is a long way from actively supporting religion. In spite of this, no name is, or used to be, more frequently quoted than his, in support of the Church's contention that a reconciliation has taken place.

The admissions of Sir Oliver Lodge are, in a certain sense, all the more important because he undoubtedly is one of the few men of science who still retain a strong belief in a spiritual world. In the *Hibbert Journal* for January, 1905, he informs us that he is opposed to a materialistic monism, such as Haeckel's, and that "the progress of thought has left him [Haeckel], as well as his great English exemplar, Herbert Spencer, somewhat high and dry, belated and stranded by the tide of opinion which has now begun to flow in another direction."[2] This is the sort of statement which is eagerly seized upon by the Church; but it neither witnesses to the truth of Christianity, nor does it voice the opinion of the scientific world. It is the opinion of a scientist who believes that he has had "communication with spirits."[3] Professor

[1] See *Nature*, April 23rd, 1903; also Appendix to this work.

[2] This assertion is severely criticised by Mr. Joseph McCabe in the *Hibbert* for July, 1905. Mr. McCabe holds that "Sir Oliver Lodge's own conception of life may, with a far greater show of reason, be described as a modified survival of an older doctrine" (p. 746).

[3] Dr. Alfred Russel Wallace, the distinguished naturalist and evolutionist, is another scientist with spiritist convictions, and his concern for supernatural religion led him to step outside his own domain and make that remarkable attack upon current scientific opinions in astronomical matters which met with such unanimous condemnation (see the *Fortnightly Review* for March and September, 1903).

Ray Lankester, one of our leading biologists in England, indignantly refutes Sir Oliver's strictures on Professor Haeckel.[1]

Now, it is, of course, quite true that there are schools of thought opposed to Haeckel's. There is, for instance, the school which considers that science has no business to concern herself with theology; and there are the metaphysicians. But the point I wish to make clear is that all these schools are heterodox. They do not accept the Christian dogmas. It is so easy for false impressions on such matters to get about, and, I regret to add, this does not occur altogether by chance. When Haeckel, one of our greatest living biologists, was caught tripping in his knowledge of theology by a professor of that subject, the Church explained to the laity that the great Dr. Loofs had shown that Haeckel had forfeited his claim to consideration as a reliable man of science; and, on this basis, his *Riddle of the Universe* was held up to obloquy and derision. The Church, however, did not mention at the same time that Haeckel had expressly said that he was not skilled in theology, and that it was only in his own branch of knowledge that he spoke with authority. Nor did the Church mention that their champion, the learned theologian, Dr. Loofs, himself discredits the notion of the Virgin-birth, and that the chief bone of contention between the two professors was simply the question of the parentage of Jesus.

It is just because science and religion *are* in conflict that the religious naturally wish to discredit science. They will, if they are sufficiently ignorant, go so far

[1] In the *Times*, October, 1904.

as Lady Blount,[1] and hold that the earth is flat and without motion. But such persons should note that in the Church itself there are a few—the few best qualified to form an opinion—who accept all the main facts of science, and do not think, or pretend that they think, that there has been any reconciliation. The Rev. P. N. Waggett is one of these. He is an apologist of unusual scientific competence, and his new handbook for the clergy, *Religion and Science*, simply bristles with problems which he confesses have yet to be solved. However, he does not allow himself to be disturbed. Conclusions adverse to theology are to be resisted. In other words, we must possess our souls in patience until we can see a way out of our difficulties. He remarks: "There are conclusions which are to be dissolved, and conclusions which are to be avoided; but there are also conclusions which have to be resisted, held at bay—'held up,' I think some adventurous Western people call it—until we can see our way to destroy them. Such a resistance is not irrational." He personally prefers "the positive or scientific treatment and pursuit of religion," and he goes on to say that "this positive pursuit of the facts of the spirit must be maintained in spite of difficulties. It must be maintained in spite of outstanding discrepancies with science." To my mind, the position here taken up by Mr. Waggett is the only possible one for a convinced Christian who has a real knowledge of science. He avoids the snares into which so many of his fellow clerics have fallen. For he does not jump at the conclusion that every "gap" in our

[1] At Exeter Hall, in March, 1905, Lady Blount developed her "flat-earth" theory, and accused Newton of want of logic.

knowledge of life's mysteries is a proof of the supernatural. Nor does he attempt to show, as many other apologists are wont to do, that there is no direct connection between science and religion. He does not try to escape the criticism of metaphysical conclusions which a scientific habit of thought engenders. But, while his position may appear at first sight a tenable one, whether it be so or not depends entirely upon the correctness of the assumption on which his argument is really based—the true witness of the heart, as against the false witness of the reason. It is interesting to compare Mr. Waggett's position with that of another of the progressives. The Rev. John Kelman writes in *Ideals of Science and Faith*[1]: "So far as we have gone, the history of the past, viewed by the light in which the newer conceptions of the Bible have placed it, shows that, at the present moment in the progress of thought, science and religion are not in the least degree at strife. They need no reconciliation." Suppose the Rev. J. Kelman to be right and the Rev. P. N. Waggett to be wrong, what then? It is the *newer* conceptions of the Bible which make it possible for Mr. Kelman to speak of a reconciliation — the very conceptions which the orthodox cannot, and will not accept. The orthodox believer is told that religion and science are reconciled; but he is not told by what means. Thus the orthodox, who would never think of accepting the

[1] A book, edited by the Rev. J. E. Hand (George Allen), which gives, perhaps, the best that can be said by able and fair-minded men, writing in the light of the latest knowledge and criticism, in favour of a reconciliation between religion and science. The book contains essays by various authors—Sir O. Lodge, Professors Thomson, Geddes, and Muirhead, the Rev. P. N. Waggett, the Rev. John Kelman, and others.

"terribly heterodox" ideas of the advanced school, are all the time accepting a result which could only be arrived at by the help of those self-same ideas. In fact, it was the very necessity for a reconciliation which originated their invention.

So much is said about "scientific doubt" in these days that it is well to remember that doubts as to the truth of the Christian belief are not caused alone by purely scientific difficulties of faith. Carlyle refused to accept Darwin's theories. His temperament was strongly inclined to a stern Puritanical piety, and his whole nature was antipathetic to science. Yet he did not think it possible that "educated honest men could profess much longer to believe in historical Christianity." Renan, a profound scholar in Oriental languages, shows, in his famous work, *The Life of Jesus*, that, while keenly appreciative of all that was beautiful in the life and teaching of Jesus, he was forced, by his study of the Scriptures[1] in the original, to the conclusion that the miraculous part of the narrative had no historical foundation. Leo Tolstoi, the helper of the helpless, whose voice is ever raised in the cause of universal love and peace, vainly sought an answer to religious doubts, and finally renounced Christian dogmas, building up a religion of his own. Numerous instances could be given showing that well-known and pious-minded thinkers have rejected Christianity on grounds other than scientific. And this diversity in the reasons for negation further tends to strengthen

[1] Dr. W. Barry, in his *Ernest Renan*, is content to attribute the change mainly to Renan's study of Kant. But such a theory is inconsistent with Renan's own statement in his *Reminiscences*, where he expressly declares that questions of history, not metaphysics, shook his faith.

those suspicions regarding our faith which it is now the apologist's task to dispel.

A significant circumstance is the far more tolerant attitude of the better-informed clergy towards the unbeliever. There still remain persons of the Dr. Torrey and the Rev. J. Morgan Gibbon[1] type, ready to vilify the agnostic; but their number is rapidly on the decrease. The clergy, as a whole, are more tolerant now than many of the pious laity. Why is this? Is it not because they are beginning to appreciate the perplexities of faith, and to learn that agnostics as a body can be, and are, good men? Under certain conditions they themselves have severe wrestlings with the dictates of reason, and it is only by prayer[2] and occupying their minds in their work that they are able to dispel dark doubts. They will tell you that a faith such as theirs, and such as they hope you will attain after emergence from doubt, is a real faith, with which the faith of the ordinary person, accepting everything on trust, is not to be compared.

It is all very well to talk glibly, as so many do nowadays, of an age of tolerance. How can *man* be tolerant in matters concerning which *God* is alleged to have distinctly told us that He is not tolerant? It has often occurred to me that, were there such a person as the Devil, he must be much puzzled over the case of the high-minded agnostic, and more especially so if the latter conceived it his duty to propagate his views. In other words, if he were a militant agnostic—a Huxley or a Holyoake. For, on

[1] Author of a vituperative libel on agnostics, called *Atheism and Faith*.

[2] The psychical aspect of the belief of such persons is discussed in Chap. VI., § 5.

the one hand, if the Devil could persuade the agnostic to adopt religious conformity at the expense of self-respect, he would ruin the agnostic's character, and so drag one more soul into perdition; but he would at the same time be rendering the whole Christian community a service by saving them from the dangerous advice of the agnostic. On the other hand, if Satan aided the agnostic in the line of conduct which he was at present conscientiously pursuing, the soul of the latter would slip from Satan's grasp (for I presume there can be no punishment for honesty); but, as Anti-Christ, Satan would reap a grand harvest from the seeds of unbelief sown by the agnostic. And the purer and more unselfish the life of the agnostic, the more the latter would influence people to share his opinions. How does God view this perplexing situation? We are told from the pulpit nowadays, by the broader-minded parson, not only that agnostics may be good men, but that they "exhibit the very temper which Christ blesses."[1] This curious truce between Believer and Unbeliever, each still holding fast to his belief or unbelief, only serves to demonstrate with added force that there is not, and cannot be, a reconciliation between Faith and Knowledge.

## § 4. *The Genesis and Character of the New Outburst.*

It is imperative that the Churches should appreciate the real character of the new outburst of scepticism. The controversy with rationalism has entered upon another phase—a phase far more dangerous to the

[1] Canon Scott Holland, in a sermon preached in St. Paul's Cathedral on the first Sunday after Epiphany, 1905. See also Appendix.

security of Christendom. As was inevitable, the suspicions regarding the faith have filtered down to classes that are not content to be duped because, forsooth, it is said to be for their good. They have none of the reasons of the upper-class agnostic for "lying low." The enlightenment of the working man has been accelerated during the past year or so by the issue of cheap reprints from the books of our great scientists and thinkers, and by a direct attack upon religion by the well-known editor of the *Clarion*, Robert Blatchford. That the Churches are already partly alive to the new danger is evinced by their present anxious attitude towards the spread of knowledge likely to be damaging to the Faith. It was one of the subjects discussed at the Canterbury Diocesan Conference in June, 1904, and will, doubtless, be earnestly discussed at the next Church Congress, together with the whole question of the rapid increase in unbelief. While, however, the Church inveighs against the "reprints," she gives out, also, that "Christianity is always strengthened by being attacked." This is hardly consistent. For why not, then, allow the process of strengthening to continue by these means? Certainly, *if* Christianity be true, the Church ought to be strengthened. How could it be otherwise? It might compel her to discard some of her dogmas; but that would only be if they were false, and, in such case, she is better without them. Nothing but good should arise from a thorough examination of her tenets. She would be enabled to find out where her weakness lies, and thus to emerge from the ordeal stronger than ever.

Those who wish, as I do, to learn the whole truth concerning Christianity, hope that she will no longer

postpone a complete and unbiassed investigation of the whole of the anti-Christian arguments. Doubtless we shall get our wish in time; but meanwhile we deplore the delay, for reasons I have more particularly set forth in the concluding chapter of this book. If the honest truth be that she is not confident of the security of her position, are we to understand that the cause of Untruth is thought to be more likely to prosper than the cause of Truth?

Of the two conflicting views regarding the effect of anti-Christian attacks—the pessimistic and the optimistic—it is the former which appears to me the more likely to be correct. For consider what would occur should attacks of far greater severity be delivered—a contingency by no means impossible in the near future. Suppose the "rational" propagandists, instead of being hampered by the want of funds and influential support, were to become endowed with a fraction of the wealth of the Church, and were thus in a position to popularise their views by spending money in extensive advertisement of every description, by subsidising platform orators who would propound rationalism and non-theological ethics in every town and village, by relieving distress, and so on, would the Christian Faith be strengthened? Has it not already suffered since the sixpenny reprints began to bring knowledge within the reach of the people—the people who have, many of them, little or nothing to fear from an expression of their agnosticism? If militant rationalists were sufficiently possessed of this world's goods to start an adequate fund for the lucrative employment of clergymen who find they can no longer subscribe to the articles of the Christian Faith, and who would leave the Church if they could do so without having

to face absolute ruin, would not the secessions increase in direct proportion to the increase of the fund and the consequent means of support?[1] If those men of note who are even now agnostics at heart were to proclaim the fact and assist in propagandism, would not the flock follow the bell-wethers?

Whether hastened or not by the action of the propagandist, the masses, in these days of universal education, are bound to hear sooner or later of these grave doubts. The questioners of the Faith are no longer only the philosophers, scientists, and those who join hands with the Churches in prescribing a dietary of fairy tales for the preservation of the moral health of the masses. Many of the working class[2] are far more thoughtful and intelligent regarding questions of science as it affects religion than is generally supposed. Hitherto they have been under two very considerable disadvantages—the costliness of the books and the want of leisure to read them. The leisure disability still holds good, though less so now that temperance is on the increase; but the books are to-day offered at popular prices, and are also finding their way into public libraries. The Church can, perhaps, depend for some time to come upon the non-interference and even active support of the upper classes, however sceptical they may be; but it is the proletariat which she will in future have to deal with

[1] The Secretary of the Rationalist Press Association has received several private letters from clergymen expressing their desire to leave the Church if they could find some employment. They usually have large families dependent upon them for support.

[2] I omit all mention of the trading or domestic classes who often depend directly for their support on strict religionists. The way in which "their bread is buttered" is bound to enter considerably into their calculations, and also they have often even less leisure for the study of modern thought than a steady (temperate) working man.

more and more. She is in a dilemma; her hand is forced. She realises that discussion will cause the unsettlement of minds hitherto unclouded by doubt, and yet matters have reached a stage when silence is impossible. It is doubtful whether she has yet fully realised the gravity of the task before her. I have explained how she seems to have been deceived as to the real meaning of the apparent suspension of hostilities during the past few years. She has also to learn how impossible it will be for the ordinary mind to accept the unconvincing and contradictory expositions of the Faith which are now offered to us under the title of Christian apologetics.

### § 5. *Apologetics "Found Wanting."*

The time, then, has arrived when the pastor can no longer ignore or gloze over the thoughts that are stirring the minds of the intelligent portion of his flock. The cheap literature problem cannot be solved by applying disparaging adjectives, such as "shallow," to writings emanating from the pens of Darwin, Huxley, Tyndall, S. Laing, Matthew Arnold, Sir Leslie Stephen, Renan, Haeckel, etc., easy though it be to excite prejudice by the use of a condemnatory adjective. Books that are still costly will some day be available at popular prices, and increase the perplexities of the people. I refer to books of the type of Lecky's *Rise and Influence of Rationalism in Europe*, Buckle's *History of Civilisation in England*, Frazer's *Golden Bough*, Forlong's *Short Studies of the Science of Comparative Religions*, Doane's *Bible Myths and their Parallels in other Religions*, J. M. Robertson's *Christianity and Mythology* and *Pagan Christs*, Spencer's *Principles of Sociology* (Vol. I., Part I.,

giving the Data of Sociology), Metchnikoff's *The Nature of Man*, Haeckel's *The Evolution of Man*,[1] etc. Will not the *Encyclopædia Biblica*, with a title so innocent, and with an editor and many of its contributors in Holy Orders, soon find its way into our public libraries and be a thorn in the side of the orthodox? Think how a book such as Nunquam's (Robert Blatchford) *God and My Neighbour* must already have been read by and have affected the convictions of thousands of the working class. And the grave doubts of a hard-headed artisan are not in the least likely to be dispelled by *Anti-Nunquam*,[2] or any of the literature so far published as a panacea "in relief of doubt."[3] Indeed, some apologetic works are enough in themselves to create mistrust, though the reader had not read a single anti-Christian work! The extraordinary divergence in the views of the authors, to say nothing of the transparency of some of their arguments, prevents all chance of apologetics convincing any but those already determined to be convinced. The writer in one stage of thought absolutely contradicts a writer in another stage. Compare Goulburn and Pusey in their awful assertions of everlasting punishment with Allin's *Universalism Asserted* and *Larger Hope* leaflets, or the views of a Wace regarding Evolution with the views of a Waggett. If we confine ourselves to making comparisons only between the advanced thinkers themselves, compare

[1] A cheap edition has since been published by the R. P. A.

[2] *Anti-Nunquam*, by Dr. Warschauer, with prefatory note by J. Estlin Carpenter, is considered by many Churchmen to be an admirable refutation of *God and My Neighbour*. I have seldom read anything less likely to convince. Sentence after sentence is open to the gravest exception.

[3] See Appendix.

the opinions of Dr. Gore, Bishop of Birmingham (late of Worcester), with those of Canons Henson and Cheyne. The deplorable state of religious apologetics is becoming notorious, and articles bearing on the subject are now appearing from time to time in our leading magazines.[1]

In defending the Faith the advanced school of the Church now frankly admit the difficulties of the old belief, and ask us to accept their new interpretations of Christianity. The older school of theologians, the school who can bring themselves neither to assert the truth of evolution nor to give a decided opinion on the verbal inspiration of the Bible, are unwillingly, very unwillingly, beginning to follow in their wake. The views of the two schools being in conflict on many vital points, it is impossible that they can ever be brought into agreement. Yet, unless concerted measures are soon taken, confusion will be worse confounded. To add to the perplexity of the situation, there are also the various views of the Nonconformists to be taken into account. Then there are the Scottish Churches, having on the one side the law-supported minority, standing for an infallible Bible and all the doctrines of John Calvin; and, on the other, the majority standing for a form of Christianity which is really Calvinism with a somewhat unequally-applied veneer of Higher Criticism. Finally there is the Irish Roman Catholic Church still sunk in the gross superstitions of the Dark Ages.

[1] *E.g.*, in the *Nineteenth Century and After*, see the article on "The Present Position of Religious Apologetics," appearing in the issue for October, 1903; or on "Freethought in the Church of England" in the issues for September and December, 1904. The answers in the same journal are most unsatisfactory, and only serve to show how very little, apparently, can be said in reply.

The advanced school represent the section which is in close touch with modern thought, so that their new interpretations of the Faith constitute the one and only hope of arresting the advance of agnosticism. On the other hand, the justice of the objections to these new interpretations is borne out by the circumstance that many of the older school would no more think of accepting them than they would of giving up their belief; rather than accept them they prefer to deny the facts of science. Both sides do violence to their reason—the enlightened in using the subtleties of their intellect for interpretations which appear transparently false alike to the orthodox and to the unbeliever; the obscurantist in denying established facts. Consider for a moment what all this means. It means that the modern sceptic has the support of the strictly orthodox when he refutes the only explanations as yet offered to dispel his doubts. It means that the validity of the agnostic's objections to these new-fangled interpretations is fully borne out by the common sense of Christians themselves, and that a denial of the facts of science and of the results of Biblical research is the only way we can escape from unbelief. If a puzzled truth-seeker tried to take a middle course, he would have to believe that black and white were the same colour, and his belief would degenerate into an exceedingly unedifying grey. There is a large proportion of this "grey" belief just now.

I cannot too strongly reiterate that this complete divergence in the interpretation of a revelation alleged to have been vouchsafed by God cannot but give rise to the most intense suspicion. The very word "apologetics" is self-condemnatory. How is it that

the claims of Christianity require all this vindication? Heresies and schisms and the need for apologetics form the constant note of Christian history from first to last. True there was a lull in the questionings of the Faith; but that was during the Dark Ages, when the priests adopted the policy of keeping the world in ignorance, and of destroying all the evidences against Christianity that they could lay their hands upon. If the events said to have happened really happened, and if God wished the world to know of them, why all this mystery, why the need for all these apologetics concerning them? Which of the conflicting explanations are we to take as correct?

The late Bishop of Durham, Dr. Westcott, in a passage in his book, *Lessons from Work*, says: "It would be easier if we might divest ourselves of the divine prerogative of reason. It would be easier, but would that be the life which Christ came down from heaven to show us and place within our reach?" It is not for me to quarrel with so emphatic a pronouncement in favour of using our reason; but such advice cannot be reconciled with the teaching of Christ or of our own Church—that we should receive God's word as "babes." Remember those strange words attributed to Him: "I thank Thee, O Father, Lord of heaven and earth, because Thou hast hid these things from the wise and prudent and revealed them unto babes." From this one would gather that it was God's pleasure to hide Himself from the wise, and therefore that the increase of agnosticism alongside the spread of knowledge was all part of the Divine plan. The Roman Catholic Church is more consistent. She obeys the alleged teaching of Christ in this respect to the letter. The truth is that when

Jesus spoke these words, if He ever did speak them, the vast majority of mankind were "babes." His disciples were "babes"; His enemies the more enlightened. He did not foresee the advance of knowledge and the spread of education. Nor did the Church anticipate this increase in "wisdom," or rather, I should say, she employed every possible means to hinder it. If God's revelation may be understood by babes, it must be very simple. How, then, do we find it requiring all this explanation—explanation which no ordinary adult can understand? Who could call modern theology simple? Can we say that of our philosopher-Premier's books, *A Defence of Philosophic Doubt* and *The Foundations of Belief?* Is it not because the Church recognises that the masses will never understand all these subtle explanations and pleas for a re-statement of Christianity that she is in no hurry to impart the new ideas from the pulpit? Even the more intellectual truthseeker is constantly recommended to trust less to his reason, and "to come to Christ as a little child."

The objections of the more conservative to the new interpretations of Christianity are well expressed in the solemn words of a former Dean of St. Paul's Cathedral, himself inveighed against, in his day, as somewhat of a freethinker. "Many," writes Dean Mansell, "who would shrink with horror from the idea of rejecting Christ altogether, will yet speak and act as if they were at liberty to set up for themselves an eclectic Christianity, separating the essential from the superfluous portions of Christ's teaching, deciding for themselves how much is permanent and necessary for all men, and how much is temporary and designed only for a particular age and people. Yet if Christ is

indeed God manifest in the Flesh, it is surely not less impious to attempt to improve His teaching than to reject it altogether. Nay, in one respect it is more so, for it is to acknowledge a doctrine as the revelation of God, and, at the same time, to proclaim that it is inferior to the wisdom of man."

The Athanasian Creed controversy furnishes some striking examples of both conservative and latitudinarian opinions. Dr. Pusey is related to have said: "If the Athanasian Creed is touched, I see nothing to do but to give up my canonry." Yet we find the present Primate, Dr. Randall Davidson, replying to a deputation of clergymen who desired to be relieved from the obligation of reciting this Creed: "I am in complete sympathy with the object you have at heart." Presumably he is in agreement with Dr. Barnes, Hulsean professor of divinity, who, when lecturing lately at Cambridge on the Athanasian Creed, declared that there was "no authority in Scripture for its minatory clauses." The well-meant attempt of the Dean of Westminster to smooth down the asperities of the Creed by *singing* instead of saying it, is typical of those pitiful attempts to tide over difficulties which are now so much in evidence. "We make," says one of the old school, "unsuitable persons partakers of the Divine service of the Church, and then it is proposed to alter the Divine service to suit them. Let honest Unbelievers or Half-Believers absent themselves from the Assembly of the Faithful, and let the Faithful worship faithfully." Yet, if this line of conduct were put into practice, if the modern Origens were anathematised and only those laymen admitted to Divine service who held all the articles of the Christian faith without mental reservations of any kind, every single advanced

theologian would be degraded from his office, and the present twenty-two per cent. who are church and chapel-goers would be reduced to—what shall we say? Well, the churches having cultured congregations would be almost empty. The modern spirit of toleration, admirable as it is in many ways, assists in preventing the discovery of the real truth of the matter. The Church is grossly deceiving herself if she really thinks that the apparent adherence of the majority of the well-to-do classes indicates that burning suspicions of the Christian dogmas have been quenched by Christian apologetics.

### § 6. *More Things which Confuse the Issue.*

In the early part of this chapter I have alluded to the real causes for the apparent acquiescence of the majority in the claims of the Christian religion. Among these causes there is a somewhat complex one requiring special notice, for it tends to confuse the main issue, more perhaps than any other. The Church is now appearing in an altogether novel rôle. Until quite recently her concern was only for the spiritual welfare of man, and she expected to gain her purpose by supernatural rather than by natural means. This plan, after many centuries of trial, has proved a terrible failure. It has not contributed either to man's spiritual or material improvement. Now, in England, she is emulating the thorough-paced humanitarian in her devotion to the betterment of humanity by natural means. Never before has there been that interest in the material condition of the people which is now evinced by such institutions as the Church Temperance Society and Homes for Inebriates, the Church Army, the Church Lads

Brigade, the Church Rescue Societies, Homes for Waifs and Strays, etc. The Church, too, is now concerning herself with the better housing of the poor, the improvement of our jail system, and other rational methods for raising the social condition of the people and creating an environment likely to improve the moral atmosphere. All such measures, in fact, as have long ago been advocated by rationalists and social reformers are now taken up vigorously by the Churches. "Better late than never," you will say. Quite so; but that is not the point. Far be it from me to decry these excellent results of "modern thought"; still, the fact remains that the issue is thereby confused, and will continue to be thus confused for some time to come. People will only look at what the Churches, in Protestant countries at least, are now doing, and see in it another proof of Christianity's power for good. They will not trouble their heads to consider why it should have taken nearly 2,000 years before the Christian Church recognised such an essential portion of her duties towards her poorer neighbours.[1]

Nor is it only this increase of zeal for "raising humanity out of the gutter" which has confused the issue. Numerous are the ways in which Christianity obtains a prestige sometimes partly deserved, sometimes wholly undeserved. Good works belong to the former class. The Churches of all denominations have always occupied the position of grand almoners, and, in that they have carried out that trust conscientiously, they have fully earned the confidence of

[1] Although the Church has ever been charitable, she has made no effort to *cure* poverty. She is, she must be, the ally of those to whom she chiefly owes her power and prestige. Jeremy Taylor is not the only eminent divine who has systematically courted the favour of the influential and rich.

the rich and the gratitude of the poor. But people are liable to forget that the huge donations given during their lifetime, and left in their wills by charitably disposed persons, are given usually from true humanitarian principles, and that kind hearts are to be found all over the world, quite apart from belief or unbelief. These gifts to the needy are not, let it be said to the credit of mankind, a mere soul-insurance, like the donations given, and often extorted, in the Roman Catholic and Greek Churches, for "Masses," "Indulgences," etc. All this charitable work, for which the Church is the agent employed, is usually put down entirely to the credit of the Church and Christianity. It does not seem to be realised that the "Golden Rule" is far older than Christianity, and is practised in other than Christian countries; and that the Church, in being entrusted very largely with the dispensation of charity, obtains credit for a service for which she is after all well paid, and which any properly selected body of laymen would perform quite as well, and possibly with more discrimination.

If all the good and none of the bad works performed in Christendom are to be attributed to the working of the Christian faith, the same argument must hold good of the Hindu or Buddhist faith, when the people are Hindoos or Buddhists. The code of ethics attached to a religion does, of course, make a difference; but it neither proves that the belief is correct, nor that it is impossible to have the ethics without the belief. Confucianism is an *agnostic* ethical system which the *educated classes of Japan have adopted for centuries*, and its splendid results are just now much in evidence. Only a few days ago I received a letter from an agnostic supporter of Christianity who said: "Look

at the good that Christianity does, look at its endless charitable organisations"; and he asked, "Could the *Clarion* people do anything of this kind?" It never occurred to him, and it never occurs to many of his way of thinking, that the "*Clarion* people" have very slender funds at present; and the charitable work that they do, though proportionately large, is not likely to come to his notice unless he takes the trouble to inquire. The vast majority of English people are professing Christians, and if any charitable work is to be done agnostics give their support to it, although the agents for it are Christians. However, I have not received a brief from the "Clarionettes." My object is to show how the issue becomes confused, and, if my agnostic friend is correct in considering Christianity false and yet indispensable, the future is indeed full of alarms. What will happen, for instance, when the knowledge of this falsehood becomes common property? I am fully aware that my friend voices the opinion of many fairly thoughtful Englishmen; but this is because they are in the habit of hearing every useful advance in civilisation accredited to Christianity:—hospitals, though they existed long before Christianity, and only fell out of use after its introduction—the raised status of women, though it was on the introduction of Christianity that the status was lowered—abolition of slavery, though among the most strenuous advocates for the abolition were such well-known freethinkers as Ralph Waldo Emerson, John Stuart Mill, and Moncure Conway, while the whole of Tory England shouted its approval when General Lee drew his sword on behalf of the rights of "Old Virginia," and while Gladstone, in his first Newark address, 1832, owned that slavery was justified by the

Bible—efforts for superseding the horrors and clumsiness of war, though freethinkers to a man are supporters of the movement, while Bishops from the pulpit offer up prayers for peace and in the same breath expatiate on the ennobling effects of war upon the race, and while the head of a mighty theocratic-autocratic Christian Government calls the nations to a peace conference, and then takes the first opportunity to prosecute the most unnecessary and bloody war the world has ever known.

It is erroneous assertions such as these which tend, perhaps, more than anything else, to confuse the simple question before us—the truth of Christianity. They are therefore discussed at greater length in a separate chapter devoted to popular fallacies. Meanwhile, in the present chapter I hope I have succeeded in giving some insight into the true nature of the present situation.

## Chapter II.

# THE EXTRAORDINARY STATE OF APOLOGETICS WITH REGARD TO MIRACLES

### § 1. *Preliminary Remarks.*

In this and the following chapters I hope to show how matters stand with reference to the more important points at issue between the Christian apologist and the Rationalist. The truth or otherwise of the Bible miracles being of supreme importance, I begin with an examination of the position of apologetics with regard to them.

#### THE VIEW OF SCIENCE.

Professor Huxley once made the following remark: "The miracles of the Church are child's play to the miracles I see in nature." This has been hailed by the apologist as a satisfactory admission that science concedes the possibility of miracles. It is continually being quoted in apologetic works and from the pulpit, and is apparently considered as a conclusive piece of evidence that science has nothing to say against miracles. But, Professor Huxley went on to explain: "On the strength of an undeniable improbability, however, we not only have a right to demand, but are morally bound to require, strong evidence in favour of a miracle before we even take it into serious consideration. But when, instead of such evidence, nothing is produced but stories originating nobody knows how or when, among persons who could firmly

believe in devils which enter pigs, I confess that my feeling is one of astonishment that anyone should expect a reasonable man to take such testimony seriously."[1] We never hear of this from the pulpit! Possibly Professor Huxley would not have been thus misrepresented—or shall we say misunderstood?—if he had spoken of the *wonders* of nature, and had not used a word popularly understood to signify that break in nature's laws which it has yet to be proved has ever occurred, or can ever occur. The wonders of nature take place in accordance with natural laws; miracles do not.

### WHY HAVE MIRACLES CEASED?

An obvious objection to miracles is the one often propounded by an inquiring child, "Why do we no longer have miracles?" The rationalist's reply, of course, is that, so soon as nature's laws were better understood, trustworthy evidence was demanded and miracles ceased. Paley tries to parry the question by saying: "To expect, concerning a miracle, that it should succeed upon repetition is to expect that which would make it cease to be a miracle; which is contrary to its nature as such, and would totally destroy the use and purpose for which it was wrought."[2] But, as Cotter Morison remarks:[3] "Assuming that a miracle reveals the presence of a supernatural power, why should its repetition destroy its miraculous character? Above all, why should it destroy its use? If miracles are intended to convert the stiff-necked and hard-of-heart, what more likely

[1] Essay on "Possibilities and Impossibilities," appearing in the *Agnostic Annual* for 1892.
[2] Paley's *Evidences—Preparatory Considerations.*
[3] In his book, *The Service of Man.*

way of bringing them to submission than the repetition of miracles? And, according to Scripture, this was precisely the way in which Pharaoh, king of Egypt, was humbled. He resisted the miracles wrought by Moses and Aaron with stubbornness all through the first nine plagues; but the universal slaying of the first-born broke even his spirit..... It may suit Paley to say that repetition of miracles would destroy their use; but he must be a luke-warm theologian who does not at times wish from the depth of his heart that an authentic miracle could be produced. Yet it is at this momentous crisis in the religious affairs of the world, when the enemy is carrying one position after another, and has all but penetrated to the citadel of belief, that no miracles occur, that no miracles are claimed, except, indeed, of the compromising species made at Lourdes.....When no one doubted the possibility of the frequency of miracles they abounded, we are told—that is, when, by reason of their number and the ready credit accorded to them, their effect was the least startling, then they were lavished on a believing world. Now, when they are denied and insulted as the figments of a barbarous age; when the faith they might support is in such jeopardy as it never was before; when a tithe of the wonders wasted in the deserts of Sinai and the 'parts beyond Jordan' would shake the nations with astonishment and surprise—when, in short, the least expenditure of miracle would produce the maximum of result, then miracles mysteriously cease. This fact, which is beyond contest, has borne fruit, and will yet bear more."

Some pious Christians, feeling the force of arguments such as these, contend that Christ's promises

to believers do indeed apply to all time; that supernatural manifestations have not ceased; and that, when there is no exercise of the supernatural in the visible Church of Christendom, it is owing to lack of faith. "Can you give me," asks Father Ignatius,[1] "one single text in Holy Scripture to prove that miracles and visions are to cease with the apostles? When we hear, in all directions, of the supernatural being manifested, we need not wonder, for we are living in a day which demands supernatural manifestations more than any other epoch in the Christian Church."

### BELIEF IN MIRACLES ESSENTIAL.

The old argument in support of miracles and inspiration was clearly vitiated by its circular nature, for it was to the effect that miracles were true because asserted to be so in the Bible, which was the inspired word of God, and that the Bible was inspired because the miracles proved it to be so. This argument is gradually being dropped, and I have only alluded to it to show how much importance used to be, and, for the matter of that, still is, attached to miracles, as proving the truth of the Bible. Butler, Paley, Mansel, Mozley, Farrar, Westcott, Liddon, and a host of other authorities, could not conceive that revelation could be made in any other way than by miracles, and felt that without them Christianity would be proved false and overthrown. Such also appears to be the opinion of the majority of our living dignitaries. On the other hand, the minority, which we may take to be represented by the able writers in *Contentio Veritatis* and elsewhere, maintain that "the time is past when Christianity could be presented as

[1] In his notable oration upon the apparitions of Llanthony.

a revelation attested by miracles.....We must accept Christianity, not on the ground of the miracles, but in spite of them.....There has been no special intervention of the Divine Will contrary to the natural order of things." That is, by ruling miracles to be out of court, the new school are able to reconcile the facts of science with the Christian faith. "Our belief in Jesus Christ must be based upon moral conviction; not upon physical wonder."[1] The old school, on the other hand, consider Christianity to be untrue without miracles. "The miraculous element," they say, "cannot be weeded out of the Gospel narratives without altogether impugning the historical value of these documents."[2] They are able to maintain this position, and yet remain believers, by disallowing the facts of science. It is an extraordinary state of affairs, and who can wonder that many of the laity who know of these things are meanwhile fast lapsing into agnosticism? As a matter of fact, no bishop, no clerk in Holy Orders, can honestly retain his preferment unless he believes in miracles. He would have to follow the example of the late Sir Leslie Stephen, and resign.

## § 2. *Miracle Apologetics.*

The question arises, "How, then, do the majority of our spiritual guides regard the accounts of miracles in the Bible?" Broadly speaking, miracles are divided by them into three classes—(1) mythical, but containing spiritual truths; (2) explicable naturally; (3) historical and vital. Should their views be of a very

[1] See p. 132 of *An Introduction to the Study of the Scriptures*, by the Right Rev. W. Boyd Carpenter, Bishop of Ripon.
[2] See p. 222 of *Some Elements of Religion*, Liddon.

advanced type, all the miracles will be relegated to the first two classes. If advanced, but not quite so much advanced, the fundamental miracles of the Incarnation, Resurrection, and Ascension will be taken into the third class; the miracles deemed to be not indispensable, or not serving a useful purpose, being explained away. Continuing to descend the scale of enlightenment, more and more miracles will find their way into the third class, until no miracles alleged to have been performed by Christ himself will be discredited—except, perhaps, those that appear particularly incredible or useless, such as sending devils into swine, turning water into wine, or withering a fig tree. Regarding the miracles alleged to have been performed by the Apostles we hear very little. Concerning the Old Testament miracles, however, opinions are freely expressed, and range between those of the Broad Church, who consider the miracles all belong to the first two classes, and those of the strictly orthodox, who maintain all the miraculous events to be facts, on the principle that, whether the whale swallowed Jonah or Jonah swallowed the whale, they must be true because they are related in the Holy Scriptures — the Scriptures that were accepted as historical by their Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ. People who are the children of Christian parents have been brought up from childhood to a literal acceptance of the miracles, and now they are not only asked to give up the convictions so sedulously implanted while their minds were most receptive, but to choose between the conflicting views of the expounders of God's word.

Let us consider some examples of the latest interpretations, and see if they appeal to our hearts and

minds. "In John v. (the authenticity of the passage is of no moment to this argument) we read that the stirring of the waters and the consequent healing virtue was attributed to the presence of an angel. The modern would speak of the pool as a medicinal spring. The fact is the same. The mode of description is different. The ancient knew little of what are called natural causes."[1] The explanation is sensible enough; but, while incidentally showing that the Evangelists were just as credulous and ignorant as other people of their times, it is a dangerous concession. For directly a natural explanation of this kind is allowed in one case, it must also be allowed as possible in another, and thus the fundamental miracles might be shorn of all that renders them of any value for substantiating our faith. Regarding the particular explanation under consideration, one may be permitted to ask, How is it the water has lost its medicinal qualities? Also, How is it the ancient's belief is still foisted on the credulous modern? When visiting the traditional Pool of Bethesda, now in the custody of the Greek Church, I saw documents exposed in the gateway giving the words from the fifth chapter of St. John in fifty-six different languages!

The healing miracles performed by Jesus are now frequently attributed to the use of the same power as that by which faith-cures are effected at the present time—a power upon which the science of psychology is shedding a new light, and which mental therapeutics will one day place at the disposal of the human race. Apart from this disappointing alteration in the

[1] See p. 51 of *An Introduction to the Study of the Scriptures.*

character of the "mighty works" which were supposed to betoken the divinity of Christ, is there not something abhorrent in the thought that *He should take advantage of a secret knowledge of the powers of nature, in order to impose upon the credulity of the age in which He lived, and thus secure the worship of His disciples?* At least, if we are Christians, let us assume that Christ, as man, *believed* He was using supernatural powers, and that His disciples, if they had faith enough, could remove mountains, just as He undoubtedly *believed*, according to such an eminent authority as Dr. Sanday, that He really was casting out devils when He cured "the epileptic," etc. It is certainly difficult to understand this ignorance of the Son of God; but, when apologists attempt to extricate Christian dogmas from the quagmire of doubt by such methods, they only succeed in causing them to disappear into it beyond all hope of recovery.

As I have alluded to the subject of Christ's belief in "devil-possession," I should mention here that there are still many cultured ecclesiastics, especially among those who still believe that there is such a personage as the Devil, who argue that there was such a malady as devil-possession in those days. Some even hold that it still exists. On the other hand, the Rev. David Smith, in his book, *The Days of His Flesh*, which professes to bring the Gospels "up to date," holds that Jesus, "*after his wont*, fell in with the delusion," and that in the case in which the Gadarene swine play so important a part, He, "like a wise physician, humanised the madman's fancy, and feigned acquiescence in his lunatic craze." Exorcism, it may be remarked, has been practised, in all times, wherever

a belief has existed in literal demoniacal possession. In the Latin and Greek Churches it is used in the baptism of both adults and infants, in the consecration of water, salt, oil, etc., and in specific cases of individuals supposed to be possessed by evil spirits. Exorcism in baptism is still retained also in some Lutheran Churches. In Jerusalem, at the present time, there are three dissenting sects, whose ministers practise the exorcism of spirits.

Opinions differ widely as to whether certain miracles actually occurred, or whether they admit of a natural explanation. Take the miracle of "the Feeding of the Five Thousand." The school, of which the Bishop of Birmingham, late of Worcester, and the learned Dr. Sanday are the mouthpieces, consider that, "whatever may have actually occurred, a nineteenth-century observer would have given, if he had been present, a different account from that which has come down to us." On the other hand, the Bishop of London believes this miracle to have occurred "because of the very humble, unimaginative [?], and truthful men who reported it."[1] Could any two views be more diametrically opposite?

Obviously, as has already been pointed out, destructive admissions concerning any one of the miracles tend to invalidate the truth of all the rest; and, therefore, we find that apologists of a less advanced stamp are still inclined to the view that the miracles connected with the life of Christ are miracles pure and simple. Godet, in his *Defence of the Christian Faith*,

[1] Extract from a sermon preached in St. Paul's, Finsbury, on November 23rd, 1904.

explains that "It will become easy to understand why the prodigies which signalised the advent of Jesus Christ upon earth do not occur in our day..... The appearance of the perfectly Holy Man was so trenchant a break in the life of humanity up to that moment that from the shock it produced there resulted consequences which have not repeated themselves at any other period.....One condition was requisite—viz., that there should exist a Man fit to be associated with the exercise of the Creative Omnipotence." Many doubters may be prepared to admit the necessity of miracles as explained by the learned Professor; but they contend that, up to the present time, there is no instance of a miracle having been *proved*, not even the alleged sinlessness of Jesus Christ, and they ask why, if God graciously furnished proofs to one generation, He did not, in His infinite wisdom, ordain that these proofs should be established for all time, beyond all possibility of cavil?

Passing on to the miracles of the Old Testament, we often find that those who still maintain that only the first chapters of the Bible are legendary will adopt a variation of the second class of interpretation—they will say that the events were of an ordinary character, but occurred in answer to prayer. Joshua is for them an historical character. However, Joshua x. 12–14 must not be taken literally, but allowance should be made for poetical licence. Joshua, it is explained, never really committed himself to the extent of commanding the sun and the moon to stand still, but only "besought God that the black clouds of the storm driving up the pass from the sea might not be allowed to blot out the sun and bring night prematurely before

his victory was complete."[1] This prayer, be it remembered, was for the sake of a work of butchery which God was supposed to have sanctioned! Besides, as the sun is said to have obeyed Joshua, and, further, it is said that "there was no day like that before it or after it," at least we are to infer that something very unusual happened at Joshua's request. The explanation we meet with in what are considered by some to be the "best" apologetics is that the language used is purely figurative, just as one might say, "I hope the sun won't set too soon," or "We never had such a day."

Similarly there is the north-east wind theory as a possible explanation of what might have happened, if the "crossing of the Red Sea" ever took place, and if Moses be not as mythical as the rod with which he divided the waters.

Perhaps the most unsatisfactory explanation of all is that regarding the rainbow. It is agreed, there being no other alternative, that "it is not meant that the rainbow appeared for the first time to Noah [another purely legendary character] after the Flood [although this is certainly what the Bible leads one to suppose], but that it was adopted then as a visible sign of God's covenant, as water is adopted for a somewhat similar covenant in the New Testament."[2] It is now known for a fact that, if there are any historical data for the story, the Flood could only have been local; but let that pass. Has the rainbow-covenant prevented millions of people perishing since then in many a mighty flood? Looking at God's promise as a token of His pity for suffering humanity,

[1] This explanation has been given by the Rev. Samuel Cox, and it is quoted with approval by the Bishop of London on p. 63 of his little work, *Old Testament Difficulties* (S.P.C.K.).

[2] See p. 41 of *Old Testament Difficulties*.

are not deaths occurring every moment, accompanied by agony so prolonged and supreme that, compared with them, a death by drowning would be a happy release? If Jews and Christians still really believe in this story, how is it that the rainbow attracts not the slightest devout attention? I have never yet heard this beautiful spectacle alluded to with any particular reverence. The reason is obvious. We know that the bow consists of all the prismatic colours produced in the atmosphere by the refraction and reflection of the sun's light from the rain drops, and no one regards the Bible story seriously. Yet our divines try to save the credit of the Bible by interpretations which are obviously "catching at straws." Such methods are as harmful as they are pitiful.

In all these examples the explanations offered to us seem to come to this—the phenomena were purely natural from start to finish, only they occurred opportunely and were afterwards poetically embellished; or they contain a spiritual meaning. Perhaps the most extraordinary argument ever brought forward concerning the "sun standing still" is that urged by the learned Bishop Westcott in his *Gospel of the Resurrection*. He says (pp. 38–9): "It would be positively immoral for us now to pray that the tides or the sun should not rise on a particular day; but, as long as the idea of the physical law which ruled them was unformed or indistinct, the prayer would have been reasonable, and (may we not suppose?) the fulfilment also." It is difficult to believe that these can really be the words of one of the Church's greatest scholars. To what extent will not bias influence the brain to use its powers perversely? It is far-fetched arguments of this kind that increase

rather than dispel doubt in the normal mind, and especially when they are brought forward in all seriousness by the very pillars of the Church. We are sometimes asked to banish our doubts and "craving for intellectualism," as it is called, and "to come to Christ as little children and in Him to find rest." Certainly it is only by letting our minds sink to the level of a little child's, or, what is the same thing, to the level of a primeval man's, that we could bring ourselves to accept such childish nonsense. A child asks for the moon, but does not know the physical impossibility of obtaining his desire. His prayer is therefore reasonable, and (may we not suppose?) the fulfilment also. This unconscious trifling with the truth—for in reality it is nothing else—reminds me of a passage in Dr. Smith's orthodox, but somewhat out of date, *Dictionary of the Bible*, where an attempt is made to reconcile the Mosaic narrative of Creation with the discoveries of modern science. It runs as follows: "The very act of creation must have been the introducing of laws; but, *when the work was finished, those laws may have suffered some modification.*"[1]

We have seen that, while one section of apologists contend that belief in the miraculous is essential, other advocates of Christianity try to get rid of all difficulties by suggesting that such words as "miracles" and "supernatural" ought not to be used. In a paper on "The Effect of Science upon Christianity," which he has contributed to the *Christian Commonwealth*, the Rev. R. F. Horton, M.A., D.D., affirms that "the word 'supernatural' is ill-chosen," and he

[1] Article "Genesis."

adds that "it is unknown in the New Testament, and introduces ideas which are alien to those of Christ." The word "miracles,"[1] he holds, is equally unfortunate, and represents a notion which is not contained in the New Testament terms "signs" and "mighty works." If this be not word-spinning, then what is? Does it matter whether we call the raising of Lazarus a "miracle" or a "sign"? Is the miraculous feeding of the multitudes rendered more credible if we call it a natural instead of a supernatural occurrence? Is not the whole point of the sign lost, too, if it be no longer supernatural—if it becomes a sort of juggling feat? Dr. Horton leaves us in no doubt as to the object of his play upon words. He aims at disposing of the difficulties connected with Christian miracles by affirming that everything in nature is miraculous. He observes: "There is no miracle in the New Testament so amazing as the fact that from protoplasm has developed the spiritual life of the saint." He is voicing one of the latest pleas of the "advanced" apologists—a plea which is transparently vain and futile. Development from protoplasm, like all the other wonders of the universe, takes place in accordance with natural laws more or less perfectly understood; and these things have no sort of connection with the "signs" and "mighty works" of the New Testament. Miracles are rejected not because they are amazing, but because they are contradictory to experience and at variance with the laws of nature. So far the scientist considers the "reign of law" to be an established scientific fact, and he is naturally loth

[1] *Miraculum* means merely a wonderful thing. It is certainly a proper translation of σημεῖα (signs) and τέρατα (wonders), as used by New Testament writers.

to conclude, without the strongest evidence, that, after all, he has been deceived. Much less would he come to such a conclusion when there is not even a particle of trustworthy evidence. There is the significant circumstance, too, that the laws now discovered were unknown at the time of the alleged performance of miracles, and that the belief in miracles, and in the supposed continuance of miracles, varies in inverse proportion to knowledge.

### § 3. *The Fundamental Miracles.*

The above samples of apologetics fairly represent the various ways in which miracles are now explained. Even if the reasoning were sound, it would hardly serve to strengthen the arguments for those miracles which cannot and must not be explained away—the miracles on which are based the central doctrines of the Christian Faith. Christianity stands or falls according as the Resurrection and Ascension are facts or not. The Rationalist's criticisms have been presented in many articles and books, but perhaps nowhere more clearly and forcibly than in the well-known work, *Supernatural Religion ;* and it is worthy of note that these criticisms have been further strengthened by the latest "Higher Criticism," as set forth in the articles on the Resurrection and Ascension narratives in the *Encyclopædia Biblica.* I have specially referred to *Supernatural Religion,* because this book created a considerable stir in theological circles when it first appeared, some years ago, and also because its arguments are popularly supposed to have been completely demolished by Bishop Lightfoot in his *Essays on the Work Called "Supernatural Religion."* But—and here is a good instance of the ease with which the laity can

be deceived—if anyone will take the trouble only to glance at these two works, he will find, to his astonishment, that the whole of the overwhelmingly important portion of the book under review, such as the chapters on miracles, on the Resurrection, on the Incarnation, and on the Ascension, has received no attention! Besides, there is *A Reply to Dr. Lightfoot's Essays*[1] which completely demolishes the Bishop's arguments.

### THE RESURRECTION.

Advanced modern criticism shows that the Resurrection can no longer be regarded as a historical fact, the evidence being unreliable. This is the sober opinion of professors of theology formed on the results of the most careful research, and with no preconceived opinion as to its scientific impossibility. What have the apologists to say to this? While the obvious discrepancies and deficiencies in the accounts of the Resurrection are left practically unexplained, the old argument from the "empty tomb"[2] is being discarded as worthless by the best scholars. Again, the new science of psychology robs "the appearances," supposing that they ever occurred, of any meaning that could be construed into a proof of the Resurrection. Only one argument of any account is left, and on this the apologist chiefly pins his faith, more than on anything else. A certain contemporary of Christ wrote some letters in which he shows a firm belief in the Resurrection: his name was Paul. The evidence of this one man is considered sufficient to substantiate a miracle, which is contrary to all human experience,

[1] By the author of *Supernatural Religion*. (Longmans, Green, and Co.; 1889.)

[2] See *Encyclopædia Biblica*, article "Gospels," paragraph 138 (*e*).

and upon the truth of which depend the Christian Faith and our hope of immortality! Moreover, St. Paul was not present himself on any of the occasions of the alleged appearances; and, except with regard to his own particular "religious experience," his evidence is therefore hearsay. The statement that Jesus was seen by 500 brethren at once is of little value, and St. Paul omits to mention what steps he took to ascertain the accuracy of his information—who the individuals were, what the various impressions made upon them were, etc. The appearance to 500 brethren is not mentioned in any of the Gospels. That St. Paul heard such a report does not prove that the report was true, or, if true, that the 500 had clear and unmistakable evidence of Christ's presence.

There are critics who could not accept the evidence of St. Paul, for the simple reason that they conclude that we possess no Epistles of St. Paul; that the writings which bear his name are pseudepigrapha, containing seemingly historical data from the life and labours of the Apostle borrowed from *Acts of Paul*—a work containing, so far as is known to us, both truth and fiction.[1] Less advanced criticism lays down the broad thesis that all the Pauline epistles are real letters written by him, but that "Paul, who reckoned the future of this present world not by millennia or centuries, but by a few short years, had not the faintest surmise of the part his letters were destined to play in the providential ordering of the world."[2]

[1] See article "Paul" in the *Encyclopædia Biblica*. Four of the Pauline Epistles are, however, pretty generally accepted. Five are hotly disputed; Professor Loofs, for example, rejects them.

[2] See article "Epistolary Literature" in the *Encyclopædia Biblica*.

Accepting the genuineness of the Epistles, and therefore of the passage in 1 Cor. xv. 3–8, let us pause and think over the chief features of the argument. In the first place, it seems to me that the fact of St. Paul having been a contemporary of the Messiah really only adds to our perplexities. When there were so many who were eye-witnesses of His life, why should God single out one who was not thus favoured as His chief witness for all posterity? He was living at the same time and in the same country as Christ, and yet never knew Him. Surely it stands to reason that an eye-witness is of more value than a mere visionary who wrote letters revealing a remarkable ignorance of the greater part of the narrative of the Gospels, and indeed of the whole body of teachings there ascribed to Jesus. That St. Paul would believe in the Resurrection before he took up the Christian cause goes without saying; but that he believed everything he heard from the followers of Christ, and everything he thought he heard when in a trance, does not, I fear, amount to much in the way of evidence—and especially so when we know that this was an age when the resurrection of any great prophet was taken to be a normal event. How often, I wonder, in the world's history have not the disciples of great teachers attributed miraculous powers to their beloved master, even when with them alive, and still further magnified these powers after his death? How often has it not occurred that these same stories have been further exaggerated in the course of their transmission to succeeding generations? Nothing is more conceivable than that the Bible story may spuriously embellish the real life of Jesus as much as the mythical accounts of Buddha, for instance,

spuriously embellish the real life of Prince Siddârtha. Of all old-world legends, the death and resurrection of a virgin-born or in some way divinely-born Saviour was the most widespread. Saul, the Pharisee, would have been imbued with this prevalent notion, and so could never get away from the thought that some kind of propitiation had to be made for the sins of men. Time after time a terrible suspicion must have crossed his mind—what if he were committing a heinous crime in persecuting the Christians? What if, after all, the Crucified One were the real Saviour of mankind? Doubts such as these may well have deeply agitated him. The living figure so often described to him by the Christians must have stood out before him. On his own testimony, as well as that of the *Acts*, he was prone to visions and other ecstatic conditions (2 Cor. xii. 1–4; 1 Cor. xiv. 18; Acts ix. 12, xvi. 9, xxii. 17, xxvii. 23). What more natural than that after his "religious experience" near Damascus he should be convinced that he had been specially favoured by an interview with the Saviour?

So many "spiritual experiences" of a like nature are on record that it is difficult to know which is the best to select for comparison. Professor Huxley, in his essay on "The Value of Witness to the Miraculous," takes the cases of Eginhard (born about A.D. 770), who wrote *The History of the Translation of the Blessed Martyrs of Christ, S.S. Marcellinus and Petrus;* and George Fox, who, about the year 1647, heard voices and saw visions which assured him that "there is a living God who made all things." Perhaps the case of Emanuel Swedenborg[1] may be worth

[1] Swedenborgians (the New Jerusalem Church) are to be found scattered throughout almost every part of Christendom. In England,

a moment's consideration. He was the son of a bishop, and was carefully educated. Endowed with unusual intellectual powers and an iron constitution, he acquired vast stores of learning. From early childhood he evinced a serious turn of mind, combined with a remarkable tendency to indulge in religious speculations. Eventually he received an extraordinary "call" in the shape of a vision. This converted the scientific inquirer into a supernatural prophet. He was now the mouthpiece of God. "The Lord Himself hath called me, who was graciously pleased to manifest Himself to me, His unworthy servant, in a personal experience in the year 1745." "I have never," he says in his work on *True Christian Religion*, "received anything appertaining to the doctrines of that Church from any angel, but from the Lord alone, while I was reading the Word." Swedenborg was a man who won the respect, confidence, and love of all who came in contact with him. He had a peculiarly abstract metaphysical character of mind, and was firmly convinced that he had "conversed with spirits" and "seen the Lord." So was Martin Luther perfectly convinced that he had seen the Devil when he threw his ink-pot at him. So was the peasant girl of Lourdes convinced that she had seen the Virgin Mary. So is Evan Roberts convinced that he has seen his Saviour. So have many good Christians from time to time been convinced that they have seen Christ, the Virgin Mary, saints, and angels. Father Ignatius, the Evangelist monk, may be, as I have heard him called, an emotional wreck;

principally in Lancashire and Yorkshire, there are seventy-five societies with 6,063 registered members.

but he is also a most earnest Christian, and he is quite sure that he has seen the Virgin Mary.[1] John Wesley, whose followers throughout the world to-day number 30,000,000, was also a visionary. Thousands and thousands of heathens as well as Christians have had visions of their saviours; but such experiences could scarcely be brought forward seriously as a proof of the existence of the divinities believed to have been seen, or of their ascension after a life upon earth. Visual and auditory hallucinations are now the subject of a searching inquiry by the Society for Psychical Research, and, willing as some of its members are to explain metapsychical phenomena by the simple theory of the spiritists, the growing opinion is that these apparitions and voices are purely hallucinatory and due to causes which are not extra-human.

As Mr. Lowes Dickinson pertinently remarks when speaking of "Conversions" in his article on Revelations, in the *Independent Review:* "The important question is whether the belief of the recipient in the evidential value of the experience is justified; and I think that a little consideration will show that it is not so, for it is noticeable that the truth supposed to be revealed in the moment of conversion is commonly, if not invariably, the *reflection of the doctrine or theory with which the subject, whether or no he has accepted it, has hitherto been most familiar. I have never heard, for example, of a case in which a Mohammedan or a Hindoo, without having ever heard of Christianity, has had a revelation of Christian truth.* Conversion, in

[1] Eight persons in all testify to the apparition of the Virgin Mary in the Abbot's meadow at Llanthony on September 15th, 1880.

fact, it would seem, is not the communication of a *new* truth; it is the presentation of ideas already familiar in such a way that they are accompanied by an irresistible certainty that they are true.....A religious revelation cannot be distinguished from what would be admitted to be the hallucinations of disease. A man may be convinced, with equal assurance, that he is a poached egg or a saint; that he has a mission to assassinate the king or redeem the world; that he is eternally damned or eternally saved; that he has had a vision of the Virgin Mary or a vision of Nirvana."

Another argument for considering the Resurrection as an historical fact is that brought forward by the Rev. D. S. Margoliouth. The learned Professor argues in the *Expositor* that the Gospel narrative is located within historic times. So are the narratives of King Arthur (the Celtic Messiah), or William Tell, or Robin Hood; but historians are silent about all these narratives, sacred and profane alike. There was probably a real Arthur, however different from the hero of the trouvères, and a real Robin Hood, however now enlarged and disguised by the accretion of legend. Similarly there was a real Jesus Christ; but the marvellous event of His resurrection is *unrecorded by any of the celebrated historians of the period.*

The final argument is that "the Resurrection is, so to speak, of a piece with the whole character and the claims of Christ.....Even had we no Testament at all, we should be obliged to postulate something very much like either the Resurrection or the belief in the Resurrection in order to account for Christianity." No one disputes, I should think, this necessity for the

Resurrection, if we are to remain Christians; but it is of the fact of the Resurrection that unfortunate doubters wish to be assured. The Bishop of Ripon argues that the miraculous accessories connected with the birth and resurrection of Jesus Christ find a place only in the group of *secondary* witnesses, and adds significantly: "Our belief in Jesus Christ must be based upon moral conviction, not upon physical wonder." The meaning of this, in plain English, is clear enough, and I leave it for the honest-minded reader to decide whether this is a satisfactory foundation for the Christian dogmas. Is this what he was taught, or what his children are now being taught? Will it suffice? Can he remain a Christian? Will his children, when they grow up and begin to think for themselves, remain Christians? The Dean of Westminster writes to the Archbishop of Canterbury: "Students of natural science find themselves left with St. Luke as the strongest historical evidence within the New Testament." Now, the author of St. Luke is also the author of the *Acts*, and his propensity for miraculous decoration is by no means reassuring. Besides, he was not an eye-witness. Then, too, we have Canon Henson, in the *Hibbert Journal* for April, 1904, informing us that "Any candid Christian reading through the accounts of the New Testament evidences.....cannot escape the inference that the evidence for the quasi-historical statements of the Creed is of a highly complicated, dubious, and even contradictory character." He then asks us: "Is an honest belief in the Resurrection really inconsistent with a reverent agnosticism as to the historical circumstances out of which in the first instance that belief arose?" The reply of an ordinary

candid layman is, I think, sufficiently obvious. Similarly, Abbé Loisy, the champion of advanced theology in the Roman Catholic Church, considers the Resurrection to be a spiritual fact only, and not a fact of the historical order. "La Résurrection n'est pas proprement un fait d'ordre historique." The powerful article in the *Encyclopædia Biblica* also leads us to the same conclusion.

Those who believe in the fact of the Resurrection, and have not Canon Henson's reverent agnosticism concerning the event, must believe also in all the facts related in connection with it, including the account of Jesus having eaten and having been touched, and of his bodily ascent up into the clouds. If any one portion of the story be considered incredible or untrustworthy, the whole collapses. It may be useful, therefore, to put to ourselves some questions concerning any one of the many marvellous accessories of the Resurrection. How few of us have ever had our belief tested by searching questions such as a cultured heathen would put if we tried to convert him? For instance, what would you reply if you were asked by an intelligent native of India, China, or Japan: "Who were the saints of whom Matthew speaks as having risen from their graves? To whom did they appear? And how was it that their graves were opened as Jesus died, while their bodies did not come out till after His Resurrection? What also became of them afterwards?" To this the only candid reply possible would be: "I am unable to give you any information on this subject. Their not appearing till after Jesus rose from death would seem to have been introduced so as not to give them the precedence over Him in the exercise of the privilege of resurrection.

He is said to be 'the first that should rise from the dead' (Acts xxvi. 23), 'the first fruits of them that slept' (1 Cor. xv. 20), 'the first-born from the dead' (Col. i. 18)." This, however, would hardly satisfy your questioner, who would reply: "Your inability to give me this information excites my suspicions, and your further statements seem to me to be very clumsy. To mark and enhance the death of the Messiah, nature is said to be convulsed, and graves thrown open; but the exit of the saints who were to come out of them is restrained till He should first have made His egress from the tomb three days later. And, after all, He had no such precedence in resurrection, for several persons are said to have been raised from the dead by the prophets of old and by Himself; two passed into heaven without ever being in their graves, and one of them—namely, Elias—appeared to Him with Moses in risen life at the time of His transfiguration. May I ask, Are the disturbances of nature which are said to have occurred at the crucifixion—namely, the preternatural darkness for three hours and the earthquake—mentioned by historians of the time?" You would have to confess, "They are not." Thus you would fail to convert your heathen interlocutor, whose final fling at you would be: "That seems to demonstrate that nothing of the kind could really have occurred. Moreover, had there been such phenomena, the other evangelists would not have failed to support their position with these divine manifestations."

### THE ASCENSION.

If apologetics dealing with the Resurrection are unconvincing, still more so are those regarding the Ascension. There is little or no attempt to explain

the meagreness of the Gospel narratives, how all mention of it is omitted in the Gospels of St. Matthew and St. John; and one vague sentence is all we are given in St. Mark and St. Luke—sentences which, according to the Higher Critics, were never penned by these persons. In "The Acts" the "St. Luke" writer furnishes the detail that "a cloud received him out of their sight," and that, "as He went up, behold, two men stood by them in white apparel, which also said, Ye men of Galilee, why stand ye gazing up into heaven? This same Jesus, which is taken up from you into heaven, shall so come in like manner as ye have seen Him go into heaven." In these days "ascending up" has no meaning for us. Candidly, if the writer had had our astronomical knowledge, would these words ever have been written? Certainly they would not. Then is the Ascension a fact or is it not? How is it possible that St. Matthew and St. John could have remained silent regarding such an event if they had really witnessed it? Or granting, in the case of the writer of "St. John," that he was not St. John the Apostle, though he distinctly says he was, it is still astounding that he should have omitted to record such important evidence of Christ's divinity, if it was an accepted fact at the time he wrote.

Archdeacon Wilson, in a paper read at the Diocesan Conference at Manchester, October 22nd, 1903, asks: "What do we mean in our Creed when we say: 'He came down from heaven'? We explain away 'down,' we explain away 'heaven' in the sense in which the word was originally used. What do we mean by 'descended into Hell'? by 'Sitteth on the right hand of God'?.....Spiritual truths are spiritually discerned,

and do not admit of final intellectual definitions. We can only avert the rejection of theology by recognising its limitations." Is it possible for the bulk of humanity, I ask, to possess the requisite spiritual discernment? Is it not far more likely that, with the spread of education, they will finally reject theology?

The Rev. David Smith, in his book, *The Days of His Flesh*,[1] dismisses the Ascension with the words: "When Jesus parted from the eleven on Olivet, He did not forsake the earth and migrate to a distant Heaven. He ceased to manifest Himself; but He is here at this hour no otherwise than during those forty days." One can but wonder how Ascension Day is kept in Mr. Smith's church, and how he brings himself to repeat the Apostles' Creed.

Leaving aside the thoroughly unreliable nature of the Bible accounts of the Ascension, consider how easy it is for the superstitious, through optical illusions or subjective visions (or whatever name it may please the neologist to give to these "experiences"), to be honestly convinced of the occurrence of a supernatural event, and to take care that it should lose nothing of its marvellous character in the telling. Only the other day the good people of Sudja saw a mighty iris-coloured cross appear over the cathedral during divine service, and regarded the phenomenon as a sign of heaven's resolve to bestow victory upon Christian Russia. This "miracle" was witnessed by all the notabilities of the city, who forwarded a description to General Kuropatkin in a document duly attested with their signatures. For the stupendous and absurdly impossible miracle of the Ascension we have not even got

[1] Hodder & Stoughton, 1906.

satisfactory description, much less an attested document. Is it not time that we should ask ourselves the plain question, Do we really believe that an extraordinary levitation occurred, and that Jesus Christ was seen to be rising in the air until some passing clouds concealed Him from view? If we do not so believe, why do we say we do when we repeat the Creed? Why do we pretend we do when we sit in church and listen to the account of the Ascension, and perhaps to a sermon on it? Why do we allow our friends to think that we do so believe? Why is Ascension Day one of our Holy Days? And, finally, why do we teach, or allow others to teach, our children what we know to be untrue? Surely these are serious questions to ask ourselves.

### THE INCARNATION.

There remains the miracle of the Virgin-birth. That this is under dispute among Christian theologians is notorious, and the controversy has but served to show with ever-increasing clearness how untrustworthy is the evidence for this miracle. Christian Biblical experts inform us that it belongs to the latest strata of the New Testament tradition, and that no trace of the story can be found before 120 A.D. In other words, that it is an obvious interpolation in St. Matthew and St. Luke. Adolf Harnack, the learned Professor of Church History in the University of Berlin, is looked upon, even by the orthodox, as one of our greatest living Biblical scholars, and we learn from him that we must disregard the history of Jesus' birth given in these two Gospels; for not only is it untrustworthy, but "the evangelists themselves never refer to it, nor make Jesus Himself refer to His antecedents. On the contrary, they tell us that

Jesus' mother and His brethren were completely surprised at His coming forward, and did not know what to make of it. Paul, too, is silent; so that we can be sure that the oldest tradition knew nothing of any stories of Jesus' birth."[1]

"Moral fitness" appears to be the only argument that we can fall back upon, and this is now the apologists' last stronghold. If they belong to the Church of England, they should remember that it was this identical line of reasoning that gave rise to the "pious opinion" that the Mother of Christ had herself been miraculously preserved from all taint of original sin from the first moment of her conception in the womb of her mother. As Bernard of Clairvaux vigorously argued (in 1140 A.D.): "On the same principle you would be obliged to hold that the conception of her ancestors, in an ascending line, was also a holy one, since otherwise she would not have descended from them worthily." Yet, in spite of the absurdity, the doctrine of the Immaculate Conception was formally defined, as a dogma binding on the acceptance of all the faithful, by the bull *Ineffabilis Deus* (December 8th, 1854). Certainly there is a moral fitness in the Virgin-birth of the Son of God, and it is also fit that His mother should have been immaculately conceived; and those who hold to the one doctrine may well hold to the other.

Some apologists appear almost in despair of a continuance of belief in this dogma. The learned Dr. Sanday says we ought to regard the Virgin-birth "as one of those hidden mysteries which, whether or not God wills that we should believe them now, He has,

[1] See p. 31 of *What is Christianity?* (Williams & Norgate, 1904).

at all events, willed that men should believe in times past." Is not this tantamount to giving up belief in the Virgin-birth?

CONCLUDING REMARKS.

Because God once willed that men should have all kinds of absurd superstitions, and now wills that they should acknowledge their absurdity, are we, as Dr. Sanday appears to recommend, to keep up the pretence of believing in them on the ground that they are hidden mysteries? Surely not; but, speaking of mysteries, there is one which ought to be cleared, or at least receive a much fuller investigation than it has yet received at the hands of the Church. I refer to the fact that, ages before the Christian era, certain miracles were believed to have taken place, and that these were of *precisely the same nature as those recorded in the Bible.* For instance, numerous saviours were believed to have been born of virgins, to have died for the sins of mankind, to have risen again from the dead, and to have ascended into heaven. Thus not only are the Bible miracles scientifically impossible; not only are they unsupported by anything approaching adequate evidence; not only do the specious explanations of apologists serve but to confirm our scepticism concerning them; but we find that they are not even original—that they form part of ancient superstitions. That these fresh grounds for suspecting the truth of Christianity are of the gravest character will be shown in the chapter on Comparative Mythology.

## Chapter III.

## THE DESTRUCTIVE CHARACTER OF MODERN BIBLE CRITICISM

### § 1. *Clashing Views on Bible Criticism.*

Such, then, is an outline of the state of apologetics on the subject of Miracles in general, and of those connected with the central doctrines of the Church in particular. Nothing could be more unsatisfactory, nothing more calculated to arouse suspicion of the Faith; and now, if we turn our attention to the "Higher Criticism," and to the apologetics it has called forth, we shall find these suspicions still further strengthened. On the one hand a considerable proportion of these criticisms are accepted by the more enlightened divines, and, on the other hand, those who refuse to accept any of them urge that they undermine Christianity.

The Dean of Canterbury, Dr. Wace, is one of the latter class. Speaking at a men's service (at St. Mary Bredin's Church, Canterbury, on December 4th, 1904), he justly twits the critics for describing a considerable part of the Bible, and particularly the early part, as "not historical," when "what they mean is that it is not true." No subtle theories are required to support Dr. Wace's belief in Christianity, for even the first chapter of Genesis is, in his opinion, a "substantially accurate" account of "that which

happened on earth before there were any men upon it," and "is the best proof that the Bible proceeded from God." He remains among the dwindling number of those who, in these days of Christian storm and stress, still cling to the old ideas about the Bible. His reasons for doing so are apparently similar to those given by "Roger" in a little pamphlet entitled *Roger's Reasons* (by John Urquhart), where it is sought to reconcile the Bible and Science at the expense of accuracy, logic, and common sense. For the obscurantist, belief is made easy, and the apologies for the Faith can be comparatively straightforward. For the "enlightened" the conditions are reversed.

An example of the advanced views of a Church of England divine, and of the objections to these views of a strictly orthodox Churchman, may prove instructive. Reviewing the Bishop of Winchester's book, *On Holy Scripture and Criticism*, the *Church Times* (of February 10th, 1905) pertinently observes: "Attacks upon the Gospel narratives of the Virgin Birth and the Resurrection, made with such persistence from within the Church, are ugly developments which were not anticipated in 1890. Yet, strange to say, there is no recognition of the new situation in the Bishop of Winchester's book."

This silence regarding points especially requiring explanation is, I fear, a common feature in religious apologetics. Look again at the reviewer's next remark: "The Bishop forgets that the truth of the message is intimately connected with the authenticity of the record, and a critical theory which assails the one assails the other." Here, then, we have an elementary truth frankly recognised; and, in plain English, it means that, if the Bishop's criticisms be

true, Christianity is untrue. Entering into more detail, the writer goes on to say: "For example, the Bible record of the Fall and the truth of our Lord's 'atoning death on the Cross' are closely connected with each other. Modern criticism discards the former as a myth, and indications abound on every side that the denial of the Fall leads to a denial of the Atonement. It is not too much to say that the new method of interpreting the Bible has helped to overthrow belief in Christ as a Divine Redeemer. His redemptive work and mediatorial office have been thrust into the background."

The situation could not be put more lucidly. There is no hair-splitting or glozing here. The reviewer characterises this silence on crucial points as "grave omissions," and he might have added that such omissions are calculated to arouse suspicions of the Faith. He continues: "Again the Bishop says:—

> Think of the use made of the Hebrew Scriptures by the Apostles in the Acts, or by St. Paul in his Epistles. It is ever the spiritual and moral lesson.

It is by no means 'ever' the spiritual and moral lesson only. Both in the Book of the Acts and St. Paul's Epistles the historical and predictive portions of the Jewish Scriptures are constantly appealed to, and used as the basis of argument. The suggestion that the Apostles attached little importance to the latter is far from being borne out by the evidence. One of the chief things in which they differ from writers of the modern school is their use of Old Testament history and prediction. Compare the place which prophecy occupies in the Epistle to the Romans with the place it holds in the Bishop of Winchester's

book, where no more than sixteen lines in 187 pages are allotted to it."

"Each of the Synoptic Gospels describes the scene at the Transfiguration, when Moses and Elias talked with our Lord in the sight of three of His disciples. St. Luke mentions that they talked about His approaching death. In the face of that narrative, those who say that our Lord knew no more of Moses than any Jew of the period are bound to explain how they reconcile the statement with the Evangelists' account of the Transfiguration. No Jewish scribe of the first century A.D. could pretend to have seen or conversed with either Elijah or Moses. Bishop Ryle says of our Lord:—

> In His incidental references to Moses, He adopts the language of the Scribes....He never displayed knowledge of facts which could not be possessed by those of his own time....To His intellectual powers in His humanity there seem to have been assigned the natural barriers of the time in which he lived.

"The Bishop does not perceive apparently that these arguments cut both ways, so that they tell against our Lord's claim to foreknow the future quite as much as against His knowledge of the past. And we are entitled to ask how they can possibly be made to agree with the express testimony of the Evangelists that Moses and Elijah were seen in Christ's company, and 'spake of the decease which He should accomplish at Jerusalem.'"

I have quoted these apposite remarks at length because they will come with more force from the mouth of an orthodox believer than from anyone in doubt like myself. One cannot help wondering what the Bishop could have to urge in reply; for the ground is cut from under him by his own acceptance of so

much of modern criticism. As he is a high dignitary of the Church, it is all the more puzzling. Referring to the remarks concerning Moses, it may be mentioned that, according to the critics, Moses is not a historical personage.[1] Whether the Bishop accepts this or not it is difficult to say; but apparently he does, from his desire to explain that, "in His references to Moses," Christ "adopts the language of the Scribes."

Dr. Driver's new book on *Genesis* has also called forth some adverse criticisms from the less advanced. For example, Dr. Lock, the Warden of Keble, enumerates several considerations in support of the general trustworthiness of the patriarchal narratives, and observes that the fact of inspiration, once admitted on the higher level of a moral and spiritual tone, may "well carry its influence over into details of fact, and turn the balance when otherwise uncertain." Personally, I very much doubt whether the general public, once informed of the truth, will ever be induced to look at facts through Dr. Lock's spiritual spectacles. Dr. Driver, it should be added, informs us that Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, and Joseph were presumably monotheists, though their monotheism is rudimentary, and the terms in which they express themselves "suggest much riper spiritual capacities and experiences," being, "in some cases, *borrowed evidently from the phraseology of a much later age.*" Can we depend upon such narrators to furnish us with true history? Commenting on Dr. Driver's "impossible interpretations" of the words, "it shall bruise thy head," and of "the story of the Fall," his reviewer in the *Church Times* asks: "Was it, or was

[1] See, for instance, art. "Moses," *Encyclopædia Biblica.*

it not, a promise made by God? This is the plain question which Dr. Driver's readers are forced to ask." Sceptical truthseekers, also, are asking the same question. When will they receive a "straight" answer?

## § 2. *A Summary of the Results of Bible Criticism.*

The general public know little or nothing of the results of Bible criticism. Why should they? Not only do they deem it a dull subject, but those who attend church are being informed from the pulpit that "the Gospels have been battered by years of criticism, but have come out of it stronger than ever."[1] It is easy enough to make statements of this kind, and, doubtless, they serve temporarily to quiet the fears of a congregation who know very little of the subject, and are only too glad to believe what they are told so authoritatively; but, unfortunately, such statements are, to put it mildly, misleading. The ordinary man is wofully ignorant of the "Higher Criticism." His ideas of Bible difficulties are mostly confined to common sense. He knows, perhaps, that scoffers of the London parks freethinking type gibe at Holy Writ, and he may himself have made fun of some passages that appear absurd; but here his knowledge of Bible criticism ceases. He is not aware that the critics are a body of the most erudite experts in theology, whose only motive for offering their opinion is to give to the world the result of their arduous

[1] Quoted from a sermon by the Bishop of London in Fulham parish, Christmas Day, 1904. Compare this with Dr. Kirkpatrick's remark, p. 2 of his book, *The Divine Library of the Old Testament*: "It is true that the critical investigation of the Bible raises not a few questions of grave difficulty."

research—the motives, in fact, of a Bruno, a Darwin, or a Pasteur.

In view of this widespread ignorance, I propose to enumerate briefly a few of the results of modern criticism, and, in giving these results, I shall omit those arising from a study of comparative mythology and of evolution, as I have devoted separate chapters to that purpose.

A work has been issued lately which sums up the conclusions of Bible criticism—higher,[1] lower or textual, and historical. It is called the *Encyclopædia Biblica*. Its four massive volumes set forth the new views, and support them by a mass of learning which deserves our serious consideration.[2] Space permits of my giving only a few notes of its conclusions, and but meagre details of the wealth of evidence in support of them.

*The Creation Story a Myth.*—The story of the Creation as given in Genesis originated in a stock of primitive myths common to the Semitic races. Its coincidences with the Babylonian myth are so numerous that it is impossible to doubt the existence of a real historical connection between them. Many indications show that not till after the Exile in the sixth century B.C. did the story take its present shape.

*The Patriarchs Unhistorical Figures.*—Then, again, all the stories of the Patriarchs are legendary; they may contain some truth, though how much will

[1] "The adjective 'higher' (the sense of which is often misunderstood) has reference simply to the higher and more difficult class of problems, with which, as opposed to textual criticism, the 'higher' criticism has to deal" (see Preface to *The Higher Criticism*, being three papers by S. R. Driver, D.D., and A. F. Kirkpatrick, D.D.).

[2] See Appendix.

probably never be known; to suppose them entirely true is to throw historical criticism altogether overboard. Dr. Peters is the Episcopal rector of a large parish in New York, who has done good service in the past, both as Professor of Biblical Literature in the Episcopal Seminary at Philadelphia and as the first leader of the expedition to Babylonia sent out in 1888 by the University of Pennsylvania. He has lately written a book called *The Early Hebrew Story: Its Historical Background.* Canon Cheyne, reviewing this book in the *Hibbert Journal* for January, 1905, remarks: "It will be granted that Dr. Peters's view of the origination of the stories of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, and, to some extent, of Joseph, in myths, legends, and traditions of sanctuaries, is a sound one."

*Book of Genesis Legendary.*—The book of Genesis is a composite narrative based on older records long since lost. It appears to have been compiled in the seventh century B.C., and to have been added to again later. The story of the Deluge is a Hebrew version of the Babylonian epic.

*Book of Exodus Legendary.*—The book of Exodus, too, is another composite legend which has long been mistaken for history. Sober history gives no warrant for supposing that the signs and wonders wrought by Moses ever occurred, that the first-born of Egypt were ever slain, or that Pharaoh was ever drowned in the Red Sea.

*Moses a Legendary Character.*—The historical character of Moses has not been established, and it is doubtful whether the name is that of an individual or that of a clan. The alleged origin of the Ten Commandments is purely legendary; it is probable that

they were framed not earlier than the time of Amos. It is admitted even by conservative critics that the original worship of the Israelites was not of an ethical character.

One of the first suspicions that ever crossed my mind was with regard to the sudden and complete disappearance of the "two tables of testimony, tables of stone written with the finger of God."[1] Later on, when I knew of the Moabite stone[2] and the Rosetta stone,[3] and especially when I learnt that there were inscriptions on bricks and cylinders of a far earlier date than that ascribed to the giving of the Ten Commandments, the old perplexity returned with added force. I remember, too, the same feeling of dissatisfaction and suspicion as I gazed on the clearly-cut Pali inscriptions in the Buddhist caves near Poona, and thought of those lost tables said to have been inscribed by the finger of God. I once put the question to a well-read clerical friend of mine: "How can these tables, written by the finger of God or by His direct inspiration, have been lost? How is it that they have simply disappeared without a word of explanatory comment in the Bible? It is inconceivably strange. What a witness would they not have been to the truth of the Old Testament account, and to the Divine authority for the Commandments!" His reply was: "It would never have done for these stones to have

[1] Exodus xxxi. 18 and xxxii. 16. Or, to be precise, these having been broken and their fragments considered of no value at the time, the duplicates carefully prepared and inscribed to the dictation of God Himself (Exodus xxxix.).

[2] Believed to date from about 853 B.C. The inscription records the victories of King Mesha over the Israelites.

[3] Erected in honour of Ptolemy Epiphanes, 106 B.C. Famous as having furnished the first key for the interpretation of Egyptian hieroglyphics.

been preserved, for they would have become objects of worship." Granted that they might have become objects of adoration, which is worse—to worship faked relics such as the water in which Joseph of Arimathea washed the blood-stained body of Jesus, portions of wood from the true Cross, bits from the crown of thorns, and thousands of odd pieces of bone from the anatomy of the Saints; or to venerate stones that would at least have had the merit of being genuine? Why are we left without any reliable evidences of God's miraculous revelation of Himself to men, while we have abundant evidence for occurrences of trifling importance to mankind that happened thousands of years before the alleged revelation? Hammurabi (a Babylonian monarch who flourished two thousand years or more before the Christian era) inscribed a very excellent, if somewhat drastic, code of laws upon a pillar of black diorite, and we have now got the stone and read the inscriptions; but the stone inscribed *by God* is lost!

*The Book of Deuteronomy.*—Evidence of every kind concurs to prove that in its original form it was a product of the seventh, not of the fifteenth, century B.C. In its present form, Deuteronomy is a composite and considerably modified version of the older work. Originally it may have consisted merely of the long speech attributed to Moses, and this may have been the book which was "found" in the temple in the reign of Josiah, the rest of the work being added shortly afterwards.

As it is difficult to believe that such a work would have remained in the temple undiscovered for eight hundred years, is it not reasonable to conclude that the book was placed there by men who thought the

time ripe for religious reforms—in fact, that a "pious fraud" was perpetrated?

*The Psalms a Composite Book.*—The fond delusion that all the Psalms were written by David (though why we should be anxious to ascribe what is really of much ethical value to a person confessedly immoral I never could understand) has been entirely dispelled. It is doubtful whether David wrote any of the Psalms.

*Poetry and Prophetic Literature.*—The book of Job is not a literary unity, nor was it written with any particular purpose; it is not a manufacture, but a growth.

Jonah is a Jewish *midrash*, or tradition, like the histories of Tobit and Susanna, and was certainly written after the Exile. Even orthodox clergymen now admit (in private) that the Jonah story is a fairy tale.

The great book of Isaiah is the work of several authors.

The book of Daniel was once assumed to be the most definitely prophetical of the Old Testament writings—a notion which is seriously discounted by the discovery that it was beyond question written in the time of Antiochus Epiphanes, *after or during* the happening of the events which were supposed to be foretold, and nearly 500 years after the time of its supposed author. It is questionable whether such a person as Daniel ever existed; but it is certain that his adventure in the den of lions, and that of Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-nego in the fiery furnace, are as fabulous as any in the collection of Æsop.

"As a rule," says Canon Cheyne, "the prophets directly connect the final restoration with the removal of the sins of their own age, and with the accomplishment of such a work of judgment as lies within their

own horizon; to Isaiah the last troubles are those of the Assyrian invasion; to Jeremiah the restoration follows on the exile to Babylon; Daniel connects the future glory with the overthrow of the Greek monarchy." [1]

Referring to non-Christian parallels to the belief in a Messiah, Canon Cheyne draws special attention to a Babylonian parallel, and concludes that "it is historically very conceivable that a Babylonian belief may be the real parent both of this and of all other Messianic beliefs within the sphere of Babylonian influence." [2]

The manner in which these so-called prophets can be looked upon as foretelling is explained elsewhere[3] as follows: "The prophets in the Old Testament, being inspired to interpret human needs, became unconscious prophets of the Christ.....It is quite true that prophecy explained in this way is no longer available for the truth of Christianity to the same extent that it once was—at any rate, for the convincing of unbelievers."

*New Testament Chronology.*—We do not know exactly when or where[4] Jesus was born, when He died, or how long He ministered. As to the birth of Jesus, the only account which claims to give indications of date rests on a series of mistakes. No census was possible under Herod, and none took place under "Cyrenius" until A.D. 7. The only results which have a high degree of probability are the date A.D. 30 for the death of Jesus, and the period of about one

[1] *Encyclopædia Biblica*, art. "Messiah," p. 3058, par. 2.
[2] *Ibid*, p. 3063, par 10.
[3] In *Studies in the Character of Christ*, by Rev. C. H. Robinson, Hon. Canon of Ripon and Editorial Secretary to the S.P.G.
[4] *Enc. Bib.*, art. "Nativity," par. 10, 11, 12.

year—conservative opinion estimates it to be three years—for the length of His public ministry.

*The Virgin Birth.*—The Gospels themselves afford the amplest justification for a criticism of their narratives. Jesus Himself made no appeal to His supposed miraculous birth. The only two verses in the first chapter of St. Luke which clearly express the idea of a supernatural birth so disturb the connection that we are impelled to regard them as an interpolation. It is Joseph, and not Mary, whose descent is traced from the son of Jesse. The genealogy of Joseph, given in the first Gospel, is prior in date to the story of the Virgin Birth, and could have been drawn up only while he was regarded as the real father of Jesus. Also St. Paul's statement that Jesus was born of the seed of David according to the flesh cannot be reconciled with the account of his having been born of a virgin. There is no recorded adoration of the Virgin by St. Paul, or, for the matter of that, by any of the Apostles or disciples.

Apologists point out that among the Jews, generally, the notion of supernatural birth did not attach to their conception of the Messiah. This is true; but in the school of thought of which Philo was head there were traditions that every child of promise was born of a virgin. Now Philo, the Hellenistic Jewish philosopher of Alexandria, was a contemporary of Christ, and the influence of his school is not disputed. Speaking of him in the article on Alexandria in his *Dictionary of the Bible*, Dr. Smith says: "It is impossible not to feel the important office which the mystic philosophy, of which Philo is the representative, fulfilled in preparing for the apprehension of the highest Christian truth." In the next chapter we

shall see that this "mystic philosophy" sprang from a heathen source, and that for the whole birth and childhood story of St. Matthew, in its every detail, it is possible to trace a pagan substratum.

*Jesus.*—Professor A. B. Bruce,[1] writer of the article on "Jesus," points out that, while the Gospels may be regarded as, in the main, a trustworthy tradition, they are unreliable in many of their details. Those details turn out to be the all-important ones, for he goes on to show that: The Temptation is a symbolic representation of a spiritual experience; the story of the Crucifixion is not pure truth, but truth mixed with doubtful legend; the night trial, the mocking, the incident of Barabbas, the two thieves, and the preternatural concomitants of the death are picturesque accessories of doubtful authenticity; Christ's conceptions of Messiahship were greatly influenced by the later Isaiah; while His spiritual intuitions are pure truth valid for all ages, His language concerning the Father shows limitation of vision; His acts of healing are considered to be real, though it does not follow that they were miraculous. Referring to the strange statement that Jesus declined to expound His parables to the people, lest they should be converted, we are assured that "it is not credible that Jesus would either cherish or avow such an inhuman intention, though it is possible that in His disappointment He may have expressed Himself in such a way as to be misunderstood."

This is all very well; but, if this be granted, we are naturally anxious to know in how many more matters Jesus may not have been misunderstood.

[1] The late Rev. A. B. Bruce, D.D., Professor of Apologetics and New Testament Exegesis, Free Church College, Glasgow.

What is the use of a revelation which can be misunderstood in this way? What can be the motive of the Omnipotent Revealer in allowing Himself to be misunderstood? Were not His hearers who misunderstood Him His own selected expositors?

We even find suspicion thrown on the supposed early belief in the divinity of Jesus. For the writer points out that, while in the Gospel of St. Luke Jesus is called "the Lord" about a dozen times, the earlier Gospels of St. Matthew and St. Mark refer to Him simply as "Jesus"—"a fact which seems to indicate the gradual evolution of the belief in His divinity."

The conclusions of Professor Schmiedel, D.D., of Zürich, one of the writers of the article on the Gospels, are still more destructive. He admits[1] that his criticisms "may have sometimes raised a doubt whether any credible elements were to be found in the Gospels at all," and that there are only nine passages which "might be called the foundation-pillars for a truly scientific life of Jesus." He admits also "the meagreness of the historical testimony regarding Jesus," as well "in canonical writings outside of the Gospels" as "in profane writers such as Josephus, Tacitus, Suetonius, and Pliny."

*The Resurrection.* — The all-important subject of the "Resurrection" is treated by Professor Schmiedel, who tells us that the Gospel accounts "exhibit contradictions of the most glaring kind." The actuality of the Resurrection depends for its establishment upon these very narratives, and in such a case unimpeachable witnesses are naturally demanded. Such witnesses do not exist. The reality

[1] See *Enc. Bib.*, art. "Gospels," par. 139.

of the appearances has ever been in dispute. The account of the watch at the sepulchre and the sealing of the tomb is now given up as unhistorical even by those who accept the story as a whole. "The statements as to the empty tomb are to be rejected."[1] The silence of St. Paul with regard to these details is unaccountable, if the story of the Resurrection be true. For him nothing less than the truth of Christianity rested on the actuality of the Resurrection of Jesus. During his visit to Jerusalem he had had opportunities of acquiring knowledge relating to it, and it may naturally be assumed that, when endeavouring to prove to the Corinthians the truth of the Resurrection, he would state fully and clearly all that he knew about it. It is admitted on all hands that the appearance recorded by him was in the nature of a vision—a purely subjective experience. And it is well known that St. Paul uses the same Greek word to describe both the appearance to himself and the appearances to the original disciples, thereby implying the possibility that the latter also were of a visionary or subjective character. An apologetic tendency is perceptible in the Gospel account, and this may help to explain the rise of unhistorical elements. It is probable that, in the absence of knowledge, conjectures were freely made, and many questions asked, the replies to which were afterwards assumed to be facts.

*The Gospels.*—The article on the Gospels by Dr. E. A. Abbott[2] and Professor Schmiedel is crowded

[1] See *Enc. Bib.*, art. "Gospels," par. 133, where the reasons for this conclusion are explained. See also par. 108.

[2] Author of various theological works, Hulsean Lecturer, Cambridge, 1876; Select Preacher, Oxford, 1877.

with damaging criticism. The view hitherto current that the four Gospels were written by Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John, and appeared thirty or forty years after the death of Jesus, can, it is stated, no longer be maintained. The four Gospels were compiled from earlier materials which have perished, and the dates when they first appeared in their present form are given as follows:—Mark, certainly after the destruction of Jerusalem in the year 70[1]; Matthew, about 119 A.D.; Luke, between 100 and 110; and John, between 132 and 140. But, even if we accept more conservative opinions which place the earliest Gospel about 65 A.D., that would not, of course, make any material difference, nor affect the conclusions of criticism as to their *contents*. Some of their statements of fact are quite erroneous, and the data are often in direct contradiction to one another. The evangelists made it clear that they wrote with a "lack of concern for historical precision." The imperfection of the Gospel accounts is everywhere manifest. Even if His ministry lasted only a few months, He must have said a thousandfold more, and repeated His sayings with many variations. The text must not be taken as a trustworthy guide to His original meaning. It merely shows us what the evangelists or their predecessors believed him to mean. The situations in which the words of Jesus are said to have been spoken cannot be implicitly accepted.

Both St. Matthew and St. Mark seem to have read

[1] The interpolation in the last chapter of St. Mark goes back far into the second century. It is important to bear in mind that none of the dates given by Dr. Harnack and other authorities applies to the Gospels exactly as we now have them. Accounts of miracles have been added subsequently!

into the utterances of Jesus details borrowed from subsequent facts or controversies. The historical value of the third Gospel is lowered by evidence of the writer's errors and misunderstandings. It has been widely assumed that it was written by the physician Luke, and that Luke was a companion of Paul. This view of its Pauline character, however, can now be maintained only in a very limited sense. It is clear that the third Gospel and the Acts are by the same author, but that author was not Luke. In the fourth Gospel we find more ambiguities than in all the other three together. The story of the raising of Lazarus cannot be considered historical. The common-sense view of the Synoptic omission of the raising of Lazarus is that earlier authors omitted the tradition because they did not accept it, and probably had never heard of it. "Is, then, the record of the raising of Lazarus a fiction?" asks Dr. Abbott. "Not a fiction, for it is a development. But it is non-historical, like the history of the Creation in Genesis, and like the records of the other miracles in the fourth Gospel, all of which are poetic developments."[1]

Lastly, we are plainly warned that "it is vain to look to the Church fathers for trustworthy information on the subject of the origin of the Gospels."[2] This is an exceedingly grave admission when we remember that these same untrustworthy fathers of the Church did the work of sifting the wheat from the chaff—settling what was and what was not canonical.

It need hardly be said that these general conclusions, which are supported by evidence that has

[1] *Enc. Bib.*, art. "Lazarus."
[2] *Ibid*, art. "Gospels," par. 147.

satisfied numerous Christian scholars, entirely do away with the idea that the Gospels are credible and trustworthy narratives.

*The Acts of the Apostles.*—The sections of this book in which the narrative is written in the first person plural (says Professor Schmiedel) can be implicitly accepted; but it is equally certain that they are not by the same hand as the rest of the book. Apart from the "we" sections, no statement merits immediate acceptance on the mere ground of its presence in the book. The speeches are constructed by the author in accordance with his own conceptions. This book does not come from a companion of St. Paul; its date may be set down as between A.D. 105 and 130.

*The Epistles of St. Paul.*—The genuineness of the Pauline Epistles does not appear to be so clear as was once universally supposed. Advanced criticism, Professor van Manen[1] tells us, in his elaborate article on "Paul," has learned to recognise that none of these Epistles is by him, not even the four generally regarded as unassailable. Van Manen's position, however, is exceptional. In the article on "Epistolary Literature" the Epistle to Philemon and the Epistles to the Philippians, Thessalonians, Galatians, Colossians, Ephesians, and even the Epistle to the Romans, are recognised as real letters written by St. Paul. The genuineness of four of the Epistles is, in any case, generally accepted. As these include the first Epistle to the Corinthians, this conclusion is of the greatest importance. The Bishop of London is

[1] W. C. van Manen, D.D., Professor of Old-Christian Literature and New Testament Exegesis, Leyden.

"content to rest his case, for not being intellectually ashamed of the documentary evidence, on the four undisputed Epistles of St. Paul."[1]

*The Apocalypse.*—Criticism has clearly shown that the Book of Revelation can no longer be regarded as a literary unit, but is an admixture of Jewish with Christian ideas and speculations. Ancient testimony, that of Papias in particular, assumed the Presbyter John, and not the Apostle, to be its author.

This completes a summary of conclusions, arrived at by eminent Christian scholars of the more advanced school. Though they, or the majority of them, would be the last to make any such admission, the net result amounts practically to a surrender of the Christian dogmas.

### § 3. *By Whom the "Higher Criticism" is Accepted.*

These criticisms are, I repeat, the work not of anti-Christians, but of Christians, who have devoted themselves to Biblical research, and who are among the greatest living experts in that sphere of knowledge. Canon Cheyne, one of the two editors of the *Enoyclopædia Biblica*, has now written a volume on *Bible Problems and the New Material for their Solution*, in which he appeals to Churchmen and scholars and all who are interested in Bible criticism for thoroughness of investigation. There can be no doubt that there is a crying need for this thorough investigation, which at present is being shirked. While the main results arrived at by the Higher Criticism are, it is

[1] Spoken in an address to the St. Paul's Lecture Society, at the opening of a new session in 1904.

true, largely accepted by enlightened divines, the usual policy so far has been not to disseminate such knowledge. On this I shall have more to say in the concluding chapter of this book.

Dr. Harnack in Germany, and M. Loisy in France, may be cited as types of liberal theologians who proclaim their acceptance of the Higher Criticism. They both detach Christianity from mere narrative, and seek to appreciate it as a spiritual reality, which appeals to the imagination, the emotions, and the soul. Dr. Harnack is the Professor of Church History in the University of Berlin, and member of the Royal Prussian Academy, and a book called *What is Christianity?* is an English translation of sixteen lectures delivered by him in the University of Berlin, 1899–1900. In this book the effort to prove that the Gospels though unhistorical are yet historical, that Christianity though untrue is yet true, is strongly in evidence to any impartial reader. Take his remark on the "Miraculous Element" in Lecture II.; we find the same kind of specious argument on which I have already animadverted in the chapter on Miracles. He says: "Miracles, it is true, do not happen; but of the marvellous and the inexplicable there is no lack—that the earth in its course stood still, that a she-ass spoke, that a *storm was quieted by a word*,[1] we do not believe, and we shall never again believe; but that the lame walked, the blind saw, and the deaf heard, will not be so summarily dismissed as an illusion." Why? Because, after all, these may have been accomplished by the operation of a natural law with which we are as yet unacquainted! "Although

[1] The italics in these quotations from Dr. Harnack are mine.

the order of Nature be inviolable, we are not yet by any means acquainted with all the forces working in it and acting reciprocally with other forces. Our acquaintance even with the forces inherent in matter, and with the field of their action, is incomplete; while of psychic forces we know very much less." He gives the whole situation away, however, by making *excuses for the Evangelists*, such as "*we know that the Gospels come from a time in which the marvellous may be said to have been something of almost daily occurrence*," and "*we now know that eminent persons have not to wait until they have been long dead, or even for several years, to have miracles reported of them; they are reported at once, often the very next day.*" Again, speaking of the first three Gospels, he says: "These Gospels are not, it is true, historical works any more than the fourth; *they were not written with the simple object of giving the facts as they were; they were books composed for the work of evangelisation.*" Such reasoning serves only to confirm one's suspicions. Here is the unedifying spectacle of an erudite scholar using his intellectual powers to make out a case for a Faith built upon foundations which he has himself destroyed. We do not wish to be told that there is a substratum of truth in the Gospel narratives. The ordinary man feels strongly that the whole should be true if it be God's Word. That this is, and always will be, the common-sense view of mankind is proved by the fact that it is held by the vast majority of the strictly orthodox, as well as by every Agnostic and every cultured heathen.

M. Loisy writes in much the same strain as Dr. Harnack, and finds adherents in both English and Roman Catholic Churches, as may be seen from the correspondence in the *Church Times* during April, 1904.

In the *Hibbert Journal* (January, 1905) an Oxfordshire rector, the Rev. C. J. Shebbeare, presents the same aspect of liberal theology by means of various illustrations. He remarks: "It is evident that the lesson taught by our new teachers must have an important bearing upon popular religious conceptions and upon religious practice. *Its chief effect will be to deliver us from the error of identifying religion with belief in the supernatural—an error of which it is not difficult to see the pernicious consequences*" (italics are mine). This is all very well for those who can divest the Christian religion of its supernatural element, and yet remain honest believers. To my mind, this is simply non-Christian Theism, and the Theistic Church, Swallow Street, is the place where such persons should perform their devotions.

I crave the reader's patience while I give one more example of advanced apologetics. The Rev. Arthur Moorhouse, M.A., B.D., Tutor in Old Testament Languages and Literature at Didsbury College, offers, in a lecture[1] delivered at Manchester on "The Inspiration of the Old Testament," "an unhesitating and emphatic denial" to the statement that there is any "untruth in the Old Testament." Yet he tells us that "the early chapters of Genesis are not historical in our modern and scientific sense," and asks us to remember that, "in the nature of things, it could not be history, for it deals with facts which are, of necessity, prehistoric"! Such pitiful shifts and evasions seem to many of us wholly unworthy of earnest men. "Our fathers," says Mr. Moorhouse, "may have thought that this was history miraculously

[1] Fully reported in the *Methodist Times*.

dictated, but the Bible does not say so." No, and the Bible does not say that it is speaking the truth, but "our fathers" were simple-minded enough to forget that such a guarantee was necessary on the part of a book which they, like Mr. Moorhouse, believed to be the inspired Word of God.

### § 4. *Admissions by Orthodox Apologists.*

I cannot conclude this review of Bible criticism without an allusion to the opinions of those theologians who agree with the "Higher Critics" to an extent far exceeding anything the pious layman suspects. I shall omit, as being too advanced, the views of Dr. Driver, given in his "Genesis," or of Canon Henson, as expressed in the *Contemporary Review* and in his book, *The Value of the Bible and Other Sermons*, or of Archdeacon Wilson, shown in his various interesting books and pamphlets; and will confine myself to comparatively conservative theology. I select, as representative of this type, *The Divine Library of the Old Testament*, by Dr. A. F. Kirkpatrick (Master of Selwyn College, Regius Professor of Hebrew in the University of Cambridge, and Canon of Ely Cathedral), and *The Study of the Gospels*, being a "Handbook for the Clergy," by Dr. J. Armitage Robinson (Dean of Westminster).

In the former, which is among the books selected by the Christian Evidence Society for their Examination in March, 1907, we read: "The lectures do not attempt to deal with many of the graver questions which are being raised as to the Old Testament." But it is just the more difficult questions, such as those examined with such destructive effect by the Higher Criticism, which specially require to be

answered. Why are they neglected? The author goes on to confess that "the books were constructed out of earlier narratives; some were formed by the union of previous collections of poetry or prophecies; some betray marks of a reviser's hand; and even books which bear the names of well-known authors in some cases contain matter which must be attributed to other writers." Also we find the following significant admissions. Referring to the important last twenty-seven chapters of Isaiah, he accepts Dr. Driver's criticisms, and says: "I do not see how we can resist the conclusion that these chapters were not written by Isaiah, but by an unknown prophet towards the close of the Babylonian Exile"; and he owns that "it will inevitably seem to many students of the Bible that, in assigning the prophecy to a date so near to the events which it foretells, we are detracting from its truly predictive character and diminishing its value." However, he considers that "Isaiah is great enough to share his glory with this disciple, in whom, being dead, he yet spoke; and, paradox as it may seem, the truly prophetic character of the work gains by being referred to the time of the Exile." By what process of reasoning he arrives at this astonishing conclusion it is exceedingly difficult to comprehend.

Further admissions by Dr. Kirkpatrick must be noticed more briefly. They are: "The first chapter of Genesis is not, as we now know, a scientifically exact account of Creation." "The account of the Fall is, it may be, an allegory rather than a history in the strict sense of the term." "The Deluge was not universal in the sense that the waters covered the whole surface of the entire globe." "The Psalms, like the Proverbs, have a long literary history.

They are poems by different authors, and David may be one of them." "Modern criticism claims, and claims with justice, that the Hexateuch, like so many of the other books, is composite in its origin, and has a long literary history." "That the Pentateuch was entirely written by Moses is merely a Jewish tradition, which passed into the Christian Church and was commonly accepted until modern times. [Yet how much hangs upon the trustworthiness of this same Jewish tradition, and how much else may not the Church have wrongfully accepted?] Some of the variations of the LXX.[1] from the Hebrew text are due, no doubt, to errors and interpolations and deliberate alterations; but after all allowance has been made for these, I do not see how any candid critic can resist the conclusion that many of them represent variations existing in the Hebrew text from which the translation was made." "It was probably at the very beginning of this period [from the Fall of Jerusalem to the end of the fifth century], towards the close of the first century A.D., that the final settlement of an authoritative text took place.....How came it that all the copies containing other readings have disappeared?.....Copies differing from it [the standard text] would die out or be deliberately destroyed." "The oldest Hebrew MS. in existence of which the date is known was written in 916 A.D.—*i.e.*, separated by more than a thousand years from the latest of the works included in the Canon."

Finally, the following crucial questions are offered

[1] The Greek version, known as the Septuagint (LXX.), made in Egypt in the third and second centuries B.C. for the use of the numerous body of Greek-speaking Jews and proselytes in that country.

(pp. 88–9) *and left unanswered:* "In what sense, it is asked, can this legislation, which is now said to be Mosaic in elemental germ and idea only, and to represent not the inspired deliverance of a supremely great individual, but the painful efforts of many generations of law-makers; these histories which have been compiled from primitive traditions, and chronicles, and annals, and what not; these books of prophecy which are not the authentic autographs of the prophets, but posthumous collections of such writings (if any) as they left behind them, eked out by the recollections of their disciples; these Proverbs and Psalms which have been handed down by tradition and altered and edited and re-edited; these histories which contain errors of date and fact, and have been, perhaps, 'idealised' by the reflection of the circumstances and ideas of the writer's own times upon a distant past; these seeming narratives which may be allegories; and these would-be prophecies which may be histories; in what sense can these be said to be *inspired?* The problems raised are grave." My own thoughts, and the thoughts of many like myself, are here candidly expressed. I have nothing to add, and can only echo this learned divine's solemn words—the problems raised are grave!

Turning now to the *Study of the Gospels*, we learn from Dr. Robinson as follows: There is no proof that St. Matthew is the author of the first Gospel. He is unable to fix the date himself, but quotes Dr. Harnack, who says "probably 70–75," and who also adds the important reservation, "except certain later additions." St. Mark's authorship, he thinks, is practically certain, and the year 65 is the probable date. "It is," he says, "exceedingly probable that St.

Peter would not write or preach, even if he could speak at all, in any language but his mother tongue, the Aramaic of Galilee, a local dialect akin to Hebrew. When he wrote or preached to Greek-speaking people, he would use Mark or some other disciple as his interpreter." What, then, may I ask, had become of the "gifts at Pentecost"?

St. Luke is, according to Dr. Robinson, the fellow-traveller of St. Paul, and the date of his Gospel shortly after 70. Regarding St. John's, we are informed that Dr. Harnack fixes the date between 80 and 110, and thinks that it was written by another person of the same name—John the presbyter, or elder, of Ephesus. Dr. Robinson, however, in a chapter he devotes to the subject of the fourth Gospel, attempts to show its apostolic authorship.

Dr. Robinson admits that the authorship of all four Gospels is doubtful, but thinks that, regarding the second Gospel, we may accept the second-century tradition that it was written by St. Mark, and that St. Mark was the "interpreter" of St. Peter and wrote the Gospel in Rome from information derived from that Apostle. Very good; let us accept this conclusion. We have it, then, that *one* of the Gospels is from the mouth of an eye-witness. This eye-witness, however, was, after all, an eye-witness of only one year (or, according to conservative criticism, three years) of Christ's life; he was an illiterate person, and the information he imparted after thirty or forty years had to be written down by another person in another language, and there is no telling how faithful or unfaithful the translation may have been. Besides, as Dr. Robinson points out in his chapters on "The Great Sermon" and "The Non-Marcan Document,"

there are very important omissions in St. Mark's Gospel. Referring to a supposed source for the information furnished by other evangelists, but omitted by St. Mark, he says: "You may gain some general idea of the scope of this document (the Non-Marcan[1]) by underlining in St. Luke's Gospel all those portions which are to be found in St. Matthew, but are not to be found in St. Mark."

Now, what are these omissions in St. Mark? Are they trivial? Let us judge for ourselves by taking a few selections. There is no mention whatever of the story of Christ's miraculous birth, nor of the other incidents of His childhood which are said to be in fulfilment of prophecy, and there is no mention of the great Sermon on the Mount. The story of the Resurrection is told in a few sentences, and the Ascension in one sentence. Unfortunately, too, these very sentences are admittedly interpolations, and St. Mark really ends at xvi. 8.[2] So there is no account of either the Incarnation, Resurrection, or Ascension, and we are left with oral traditions, "lost" documents, and unknown copyists, as the only source from which to obtain any detailed information concerning the very groundwork of our Creed! Could anything be more unsatisfactory, more calculated to arouse suspicion of the "Christian Verities"—the Gospel truths? I am completely at a loss to understand

[1] A Greek document which is supposed to have existed and then to have been entirely lost (imagine God's Word *lost!*), and to contain some of the matter related by St. Matthew and St. Luke, while omitted by St. Mark. *N.B.*—While the evangelist St. Mark is relegated to the position of a translator only, St. Matthew and St. Luke are taken by orthodox theologians to be mere copyists of St. Mark and a "lost" document!

[2] See art. "Gospels," in the *Enc. Bib.*, and Westcott and Hort, *The New Testament in the Original Greek.*

how the Bishop of Gloucester[1] can say that the "Higher Criticism" has been a "gain to the Church," or the Bishop of London[1] that "the New Testament stands ten times as strong as it did fifty years ago." It would seem to be a case of "where ignorance is bliss," etc., or else of the wish being father to the thought.

There is much more that I should wish to call attention to, did space permit, but I have now, I think, given some insight into modern Bible criticism, and the extent to which it is accepted by Christians. It only remains, in conclusion, to ask for earnest thought on this new aspect of "the Word of God." In doing so the following additional considerations may be borne in mind.

## § 5. *Some Remaining Difficulties.*

### WE MUST ACCEPT THE WHOLE OR REJECT THE WHOLE.

The orthodox and traditional view of the Old Testament is preserved in the unrepealed "Blasphemy Act," 9 and 10, William III., cap. 32, which enacts that any person who shall deny the "Holy Scriptures of the Old and New Testament" to be of "divine authority" shall be incapable of holding any public office or employment, and shall, on a second conviction, also suffer imprisonment for a space of three years. The Vatican Council of 1870, "speaking under the inspiration of the Holy Ghost," declared that the books of the Old and New Testament "have God for their author, and, as such, have been delivered to the Church." The Council, therefore, ordained that the man should be anathema who refused "to

[1] In his address at the Church Congress held at Weymouth in 1905.

receive, for sacred and canonical, the books of the Holy Scripture in their integrity, with all their parts."

Dr. Bayley expressed the opinion of his day when he wrote[1]: "The Bible cannot be less than verbally inspired. Every word, every syllable, every letter, is just what it would be had God spoken from heaven without any human intervention. Every scientific statement is infallibly correct; all its history and narratives of every kind are without any inaccuracy."

Listen, again, to the words of a well-known divine of our own Church, spoken but yesterday: "The whole of the teaching of the New Testament is based upon the supposition that God made a covenant with Abraham."[2] "You have our Lord Jesus Christ building His whole life on the Scriptures, and submitting to death in obedience to them."[3] This is the strictly orthodox opinion, and it is consistent with Christian doctrine. Yet, for obvious reasons, the Old Testament is now regarded as an incubus by an increasing number of earnest Christians.

In the New Testament there are many cruel sayings attributed to Jesus. Only the few are to be saved from the eternal torments of the damned (St. Matt. xiii. 10–13, xxii. 14, xxv. 41; St. Mark iv. 11–12, xvi. 16, etc.). Happily, owing to the rise of Rationalism and the consequent subjection of the Bible to criticism, the dogma of eternal torment is disputed on all sides, and the Athanasian Creed will soon no longer be forced upon us. The principle of the "chosen few"

[1] In his work, *Verbal Inspiration*. Quoted by Bishop Colenso in *The Pentateuch Examined*.

[2] The Dean of Canterbury, speaking on the Bishop of Winchester's paper at the Church Congress, 1903.

[3] The Dean of Canterbury, speaking in St. Mary Bredin's Church, Canterbury, December 4th, 1904.

is so clearly Christ's teaching, and furnishes such a convenient explanation for the attitude of the many, that it is commonly adhered to; but liberal theologians no longer hold that "he that believeth not shall be damned," or that the punishment of the sinner is to be excruciating torture for all eternity. Unbelievers and sinners may all ultimately be saved, or at the worst their existence will end with this life. Good, very good; such views appeal to us as being more humane and rational; but are they compatible with the truth of the Bible? Mark the words of the late Bishop of Manchester: "The very foundation of our Faith, the very basis of our hopes, are taken from us when one line of that sacred volume, on which we base everything, is declared to be untruthful and untrustworthy." Thus it is that there are many who would still retain the inhuman doctrines ascribed to the Master. Fearful of losing the basis of their hopes, and unconscious, apparently, of their sublime egoism, they reason, and reason with logic: We must accept the whole or reject the whole.

### SILENCE OF HISTORIANS.

That the Bible should be open to criticism at all seems to me inconceivable if it really be *God's* gift to mankind. How could God, having determined after æons of time to make a definite revelation of Himself to His human creatures, permit the account of this revelation to be handed down in such a haphazard fashion that future generations cannot be sure that they possess a reliable record? This, too, when a trustworthy record was the more essential on account of the miraculous nature of the narrative. As Professor Schmiedel remarks, the meagreness of the historical

testimony regarding Jesus, whether in canonical writings outside of the Gospels or in profane writers such as Josephus, Tacitus, Suetonius, and Pliny, is most pronounced. Not a single passage can be produced from the writings of the great historians and philosophers who flourished between A.D. 40 and A.D. 140 which makes the slightest allusion to the astounding phenomena connected with the birth, resurrection, and ascension of Jesus of Nazareth.

It was at one time claimed that Josephus spoke of Jesus. That this has been given up by theologians may be verified by a reference to Canon Farrar's *Life of Christ*, vol. i., p. 63 (and p. 31 of the cheap edition), where we read that "The single passage in which he (Josephus) alludes to Him is interpolated, if not wholly spurious." There is also a disputed passage[1] in Tacitus, where he speaks of Christians having "their denomination from Christus, who, in the reign of Tiberius, was put to death as a criminal by the procurator, Pontius Pilate." And that is all! Could anything be more disappointing than this must be to thoughtful Christians who wish to establish the historical accuracy of the miraculous story of God's life on earth? Eusebius (A.D. 315–340), the celebrated ecclesiastical historian, is apparently reduced to appealing to a Pagan oracle for a proof of the resurrection of Jesus Christ, for he says to the heathen: "But thou at least listen to thine own gods, to thy oracular deities themselves, who have borne witness, and ascribed to our Saviour (Jesus Christ) not imposture, but piety and wisdom, and ascent into heaven."

The silence of secular historians is accounted for, by

[1] See Appendix.

certain divines, by falling back on a theory of hostility or contempt. Thus Dean Farrar thinks that Josephus's silence on the subject of Jesus and Christianity was as deliberate as it was dishonest (see his *Life of Christ*, vol. i., p. 63). Except that this offers a much-needed explanation, I am not cognisant of any reason for suspecting the famous *secular* historian, although, of course, the untrustworthiness of the *Christian* historians is notorious. Eusebius, for example, the gravest of the ecclesiastical historians, confesses, with commendable frankness: "We have decided to relate nothing concerning them [the early Christians] except the things in which we can vindicate the divine judgment."[1]

With regard to the prodigy of the darkness, etc., that occurred at the death of Jesus, Gibbon informs us as follows: "It happened during the lifetime of Seneca and the elder Pliny, who must have experienced the immediate effects, or received the earliest intelligence of the prodigy. Each of these philosophers, in a laborious work, has recorded all the great phenomena of Nature—earthquakes, meteors, comets, and eclipses—which his indefatigable curiosity could collect. But the one and the other has omitted to mention the greatest phenomenon to which the mortal eye has been witness since the creation of the globe."[2] Any attempt to explain this away by supposing that the darkness of three hours was local

[1] See Bk. VIII., chap. ii., par. 2, on p. 324, vol. i. *Eusebius* (Oxford: Parker & Co.). His candour here is deserving of all praise; but his methods can hardly be termed scientific; while an impartial perusal of his *Vita Constantini*, a panegyric on the Emperor Constantine, should be enough to shake the confidence of all but the blindest of his admirers.

[2] See p. 179, chap. xv., of Gibbon's *Rome* (Oddy, 1809).

only detracts from the magnitude of the miracle, which was intended, by its very magnitude, to be one of the proofs of the death of a God.

### THOUGHTS ON "TRADITION" AS GOD'S METHOD FOR THE TRANSMISSION OF TRUTH TO POSTERITY.

Have you ever, in the days of your early youth, played the game of "gossip"? It is an amusing game, and also points a moral. A number of persons put themselves in a long row, and the first will think of some little incident, which he will carefully whisper to his neighbour, who will then pass it on, and so on, and so on, till it reaches the last person, who will proceed to repeat out loud the story he has heard. The original story will then be divulged, and much amusement is caused by the differences that are found between the two stories. This illustration of what occurs in "gossip" came back to my mind with much misgiving when I first heard how the story of my Saviour's life on earth was handed down for a long period "by tradition." Apparently, Christian theologians look quite complacently, and without any misgiving, upon this process for the transmission of the Christian verities; but, for myself, whether it were a century, or whether it were only a matter of thirty or forty years, before the final committal to writing, it was a heartrending discovery, and all my confidence in the truth of the Bible story was shaken. My dismay was not diminished when I learnt also that it was extremely doubtful whether the authors were eye-witnesses of the events, or especially inspired by God for their task; also, that there had been subsequent interpolations by equally unknown and uninspired writers, who, to speak plainly, were

nothing more nor less than forgers, actuated, possibly, by pious motives. That the writers of the Gospels were vouchsafed any unusual facilities through the indwelling of the Holy Spirit is discredited by the remarks of the apologists themselves. Thus, Dr. Robinson, in his book already referred to, alludes to St. Peter's illiteracy, St. Mark's poor literary attainments, and the limitations to which all the evangelists in ancient times were subjected.

We find ourselves asking the questions, "Did not God know that a time would come when we should discover that nature's laws were not of the fragile or elastic character which our forefathers had supposed? Did He not know that we should therefore require absolute proof before we could believe that they had been broken in a bygone and credulous age?" Instead of this, the only proofs afforded us are copies of documents concocted from hearsay—we are not sure when or by whom—and from time to time fraudulently manipulated by interested though "pious" forgers. Did He, in His Omniscience, purposely allow events to take their course, and intend the story of His Son's life upon earth to be handed down to us by the same unsatisfactory process as that of many another ancient tradition now known to be historically worthless? If ever special interference with the course of nature were necessary, surely it would be here—a miracle to prove the miracle on which our hopes are staked. Or, if this be asking too much, if it be argued that it is no longer God's pleasure to break the laws which He has made, and that He now accomplishes His purposes by means of these laws only, how comes it that, for the safeguarding of this great truth, the most ordinary precautions have been neglected?

We are often asked to consider the yearnings of man as a proof that the thing yearned for is a reality. His yearnings, therefore, are not a negligible quantity. Do not, then, the yearnings of millions of Christians in the Roman Catholic and Greek Churches for miraculous proofs of God's residence once upon earth count for something? Are not all the "miraculous" relics and "wonder-working" ikons a proof that man feels that God's revelation ought to be assured to us by the continuance of miracles? In our own Church, Holman Hunt's painting of "The Light of the World" is being sent round our colonies, to strengthen people's belief in Jesus Christ. Why, oh why, have we not the real picture of our Saviour, bringing our God nearer to us, and enabling us to focus our thoughts on Him? I once mentioned my feeling on this subject to a clergyman, a doctor of divinity, well versed in Church history. He replied by suggesting that there was a tradition which indicated that the true likeness of our Lord *had* been miraculously transmitted, and that from this the great Italian painters had caught their inspiration.[1] It seems hardly necessary to have recourse to the supernatural when there were natural sources available in the shape of representations of pagan gods. Thus Mercury, attired as a shepherd, with a lamb upon his shoulders, was no infrequent object in ancient art, and this has, in some cases, led to a difficulty in distinguishing between Mercury and Jesus Christ. Similarly we know that the pictures and sculptures wherein Isis is represented in the act of suckling her child Horus formed the foundation for the Christian figures and paintings of the Madonna and child.

[1] See Appendix.

THE ALLEGED SINLESSNESS OF JESUS CHRIST.

It may be urged that we have, what is of far more importance, the picture of His character. Have we? The absolute sinlessness of Christ is one of the chief proofs held out to us of His divinity. It is described as being in itself a miracle so great that it furnishes us with sufficient grounds for belief in other miracles. Many pious and learned theists feel that the character of Christ as portrayed in the Gospels betrays imperfections. But let this pass. What do we know of His life? Let us assume that in the Gospel of St. Mark we are put in possession of the impressions of an eye-witness. St. Peter's personal knowledge of the *private* life of Jesus was confined to his recollections concerning a beloved Master during the period of His *public* ministry. And that ministry extended over one year, or at most three years. Have not the disciples of great teachers in the past invariably extolled the perfections of their masters? Have they ever dwelt upon their imperfections? Has not the picture handed down by tradition, and afterwards committed to writing, often been that of a perfect man? That the writers of the Gospels recognised the need for Christ to appear sinless, and adopted questionable methods for their purpose, is only too evident. Dr. Robinson explains[1] the disappearance from the other Gospels of St. Mark's references to "anger," "grief," "groaning," "vehemence," etc., as being "the result of a kind of reverence which belonged to a slightly later stage of reflection, when certain traits might even seem derogatory to the dignity of the sacred character." Comment is superfluous.

[1] In note A, pp. 42–3, of his book, *The Study of the Gospels.*

### THE IGNORANCE OF JESUS CHRIST.

There is another difficulty of belief in the divinity of Christ, which it is all the more essential to bring into prominence because it usually receives but scant notice from the pulpit. I refer to the "ignorance" of Jesus Christ. In a review of *Le Réalisme Chrétien et l'Idéalisme Grec*, par L. Laberthonnière, the *Church Times* praises the Abbé's conception of Christian realism, and then goes on to say: "Here is found the key to the mystery of the ignorance of Jesus Christ, and of the other limitations attributed to Him in the Gospels. There are two untenable theories—the one that He deliberately kept things back from His disciples; the other that He was Himself ignorant of His own true nature, which afterwards became known to the Church. The truth is that He had to reveal Himself by living among men, and not by giving them an abstract doctrine about Himself—a doctrine which must have been either inadequate because adjusted to their comprehension, or else incomprehensible because adjusted to a reality which was beyond them." The plain question, however, is —Had He, or had He not, the attribute of Omniscience? Did He, or did He not, know what we now know? Are we to suppose that He pretended to be ignorant? Was He God or was He man? The usual answer is that, as Very Man, He had only the knowledge of His age (or, should we not say, of the very restricted environment selected by Himself for His activities upon earth?), but that as Very God he performed miracles, taught spiritually, as never man taught, and was sinless. This answer, however, would not be accepted by the Venerable W. M. Sinclair, Archdeacon of London, who conjectures that

"when our Lord said, 'Greater works than these shall ye do,' He was perhaps thinking of the marvellous discoveries of surgeons and physicians in times of advanced science" [!].[1] Nor would it be accepted by the Rev. David Smith, who holds that Jesus accommodated Himself to the popular idea, and "after His wont fell in with the delusion" [!].[2]

Surely an Omniscient God must have known that grave doubts would arise in the future from the real or apparent ignorance of His Son, and, *vice versa*, that any prescience shown by Him would be hailed with delight as a proof of His divinity. If it be urged that such trials of faith are useful, why should it be the thoughtful of future generations who are chiefly to be so tried? If Christ had chosen His disciples from among the "wise men of the East" (or West), instead of from among men of the lowest order of intelligence and education, there would then have been no necessity for the doctrine to "have been either inadequate because adjusted to their comprehension, or else incomprehensible because adjusted to a reality which was beyond them." Only a very small and remote corner of the world was favoured by the presence of God when revealing Himself in human form for the benefit of mankind. Only the most ignorant, for the most part, heard His personal teaching. Had He revealed Himself to all, or to a far greater number of persons then living, and satisfied the ardent longings of the wise men and philosophers of those times, would this not have conduced to the

[1] At the discussion on Christian Science during the London Diocesan Conference, May, 1906.

[2] See his book, *The Days of His Flesh;* Hodder & Stoughton, 1906.

rapid recognition of Christianity and to its firm establishment over the whole world for all ages?

The tiny Sea of Galilee, the birthplace of the Gospel, is only about twelve miles long and seven miles in its widest part, and Chorazin, Bethsaida, and Capernaum were all situated close together at the northern end. Here Jesus made his permanent home after His fellow-townsmen at Nazareth had rejected Him; here He preached, and here He performed many mighty works. Not till I had visited the spot did I fully realise the insignificance of the area to which the Saviour of mankind confined His ministry. Round the lake stood such important cities as Tiberias and Tarichеæ. They were studiously avoided by Jesus. (This would account, perhaps, for their great men hearing nothing of the new teaching, though hardly for their hearing nothing of stupendous miracles performed at their very door.) The cities of the Decapolis were also flourishing in this neighbourhood at the time of Christ's ministry, and were the centre of great literary activity. Gadara produced Philodemus the Epicurean, a contemporary of Cicero; Meleager the epigrammatist; Menippus the satirist; Theodorus the rhetorician, the tutor of Tiberius; and others. Gerasa, also, was a mother of great teachers. In the words of George Adam Smith: "Philodemus, Meleager, Menippus, Theodorus, were names of which one end of the Lake of Galilee was proud, when Matthew, Peter, James, and John were working at the other end."[1] If it be argued that for some inscrutable reason God sent His Son only to the lost sheep

[1] See chap. xxviii. of *The Historical Geography of the Holy Land*, by the Rev. George Adam Smith, M.A., D.D., LL.D.; Professor of O. T. Lang., Liter., and Theology, etc.

of the house of Israel and intended His preaching to reach the Gentiles through the medium of His chosen people, why was such a learned and pious Jew as Philo left out in the cold?

Apologists do not explain at all convincingly why the Almighty could not, or preferred not to, make Himself understood. If He could say "Let there be light," He could also have said "Let there be knowledge." Besides, after all, what is there in the broad facts of modern science which could not be explained to an intelligent savage to-day? The shape and movements of the earth are explained in the most elementary geography books, and the theory of Evolution can be made quite clear to comparative children (I speak from personal experience). Recent discoveries have revealed to us that ancient nations must have reached an extraordinarily high state of civilisation. Six thousand years ago, in the valley of the Nile, there existed a standard of civilisation incomparably higher than that of the Jews at the time when God is alleged to have selected them as His chosen people. "The Old Testament," says Canon C. H. Robinson, "is the history of a people insignificant in number, occupying a country about the same size as the county of Yorkshire; remarkable neither for their superior learning, civilisation, nor military power; remarkable, if for anything, for their obstinate, grasping, usurious character; who, nevertheless, were chosen out of all the nations of the ancient world to be the recipients of peculiar blessings and favours."[1] This incomprehensible selection of ignorant Jews to be the special recipients of Revelation only emphasises

[1] The quotation is from Canon C. H. Robinson's book, *Studies in the Character of Christ.*

the contention that we have no right to assume that learned men of two thousand years ago could not have understood plain facts, or that it was necessary for them to believe in purely imaginary explanations of the cosmos, in a flat, stationary earth, in a blue-basin sky, in an "Adam and Eve" origin, in devil-possession, in absurd miracles, etc. Their ignorance, which was natural enough considering their opportunities, could easily have been dispelled when God graciously condescended to come and live among them. What a proof would that not have been of His Divinity!

In any case, we are to understand that the Apostles were inspired by the Holy Ghost, so that they might be able to work miracles and be witnesses unto Christ, even to the utmost parts of the earth. Surely, then, they could and should have been enlightened for their mission work up to the level, say, of some of our twentieth-century theologians? The miracle of an intelligence and knowledge equal to that of the average modern apologist is not, after all, so very inconceivable, and it would, at least, have been more useful than miracle-working in a miracle-believing age. Christians, who glibly admit that Jesus had only the knowledge of His age, cannot, I think, fully realise the force of such an admission. One reason for this may be that their own knowledge is not completely up to date. That Jesus had no knowledge of nature's inviolable laws and shared many of the gross superstitions prevalent around Him; that He accepted the Scriptures as literally true, and not in the sense now attributed to them by the Higher Critics; that He believed that He would come again "in the clouds of heaven with power and great

might,' and that the generation in which He lived would not pass away till this had been fulfilled—of all this they may be dimly conscious; but what remain still to be studied by them are the startling disclosures of Comparative Mythology, and of the now fully-established theory of Evolution, and their bearing upon the Christian Faith. The matter is one of the utmost importance, as will be seen by a perusal of the following chapters.

## Chapter IV.

# THE GRAVE SUSPICIONS AROUSED BY THE STUDY OF ANCIENT BELIEFS

### § 1. *The New Theological Theory of a Progressive Revelation.*

The facts and truths established by Science are no longer made the subject of attacks by Christian apologists in the manner that they used to be; they are now considered by them to be the unfolding, through God's Providence, of pieces of information hitherto concealed from us. A scientific discovery (by men who are more often than not Agnostics) simply means that God wills to reveal another detail of His eternal methods. There must be, we are told, a frank modification, or even the abandonment, of certain preconceived ideas which, faulty as they were, had sufficed for man in an earlier stage of his development, and had come to be regarded as integral parts of his religious faith. This is the substance of the modern apologist's argument which is intended to reconcile all outlying discrepancies between our new knowledge and our old beliefs. The new explanation, based upon the assumption that revelation is progressive, will come as a surprise to the rank and file of Christendom, who have hitherto been given to understand that the Bible contained the one, only, and sufficient revelation of God to man. However,

there is no alternative. If accepted, many grave difficulties of faith are swept away. Nay, more; the reasonableness of our faith is immensely strengthened, and the facts of science and research become a valuable adjunct to the armour of the Christian apologist. On the other hand, a refusal to accept spells disaster to the Christian faith. The truth of progressive revelation is, therefore, a matter of life or death for the Christian religion; and, of all branches of modern research, it is Comparative Mythology which absolutely demands the complete establishment of this theory. If true, our belief is further verified by the startling discoveries of the ethnologist; if untrue, it is irrevocably shattered. Accordingly, in this chapter I am giving a prominent place to the discussion of this theory.

I think I may safely say that there is no department of knowledge about which so little is known by the ordinary man, and even, I regret to say, by the majority of ecclesiastics, as Comparative Mythology. Yet it is the study of this science perhaps more than of any other which is causing well-informed men and women to lose faith in Christianity. Ask Christian professors in our universities who are in touch with the thought around them, and you will hear that their sceptical friends are all telling them the same thing; they cannot get over anthropology, and especially that branch of it which concerns itself with the traditions and beliefs of primitive peoples. Recent ethnological research has thrown an entirely new light upon old problems. The discoveries of science, including the animal origin of man, may, by a stretch of imagination and faith, be reconciled with belief; so also the disclosures of the Higher Criticism; but the very

origin of Christianity is exposed by the study of Comparative Mythology. "It is indeed a melancholy and in some respects thankless task to strike at the foundations of beliefs in which, as in a strong tower, the hopes and aspirations of humanity through long ages have sought a refuge from the storm and stress of life. Yet sooner or later it is inevitable that the battery of the comparative method should breach these venerable walls, mantled over with the ivy and mosses and wild flowers of a thousand tender and sacred associations."[1]

Some years ago there were ecclesiastics who took a lively interest in Comparative Mythology. Students of Pagan religions as well as Christian missionaries were bent on discovering more striking and more startling coincidences in order to use them in confirmation of their favourite theory that some rays of a primeval revelation, or some reflection of the Jewish religion, had reached the uttermost ends of the world. Subsequently the study of comparative mythology seems to have lost much of its charm. Why?

"The theory that there was a primeval preternatural revelation granted to the fathers of the human race, and that the grains of truth which catch our eye when exploring the temples of heathen gods are the scattered fragments of that sacred heirloom—the seeds that fell by the wayside or upon stony places—would find but few supporters at present; no more, in fact, than the theory that there was in the beginning one complete and perfect primeval language, broken up in later times into the numberless languages of the world." "The opinion," again, "that the Pagan religions were

[1] J. G. Frazer (Fellow of Trinity College, Cambridge; Hon. D.C.L. Oxford; Hon. LL.D. Glasgow; Hon. Litt. D. Durham, etc.), in his Preface to the second edition of *The Golden Bough*.

mere corruptions of the religion of the Old Testament, once supported by men of high authority and great learning, is now as completely surrendered as the attempts to explain Greek and Latin as corruptions of Hebrew."[1]

It will be as well, in the first place, to see exactly what the Church herself now says on the matter; how far she recognises that gigantic strides have been made in a study formerly pursued in a manner necessarily elementary by the Alexandrian schools; how far she concedes the conclusions of the modern ethnologist; and how far she approves of progressive revelation as the explanation for the whole enigma of the parallels between ancient beliefs and our own. For this purpose I think I cannot do better than quote from two striking articles on the subject in the *Church Times*. They were contributed by the editor of *The Treasury* magazine. "The study," he says, "of folk-lore, of anthropology, of primitive myth and ritual, has made enormous strides within the last quarter of a century, and the fruits of that study are now forced, *for the first time*,[2] upon the attention of the general public. Presented in outline, the situation is as follows: We have been accustomed to consider Christianity apart from all other religions. We have recognised, indeed, the historical preparation for it so far as that is described in the pages of the Old Testament; but we have thought of that preparation as conducted among a single people, and by means of a unique revelation. *Of pagan religions we have known practically nothing.* The mythology of the

[1] Professor Max Müller, in *The Science of Religion*, p. 40.

[2] The italics are mine throughout this quotation; also words within brackets [ ].

Greeks and Romans, which some of us had to learn at school, seemed to be a collection of pointless fairy tales. And as regards other and more primitive races, both ancient and modern, the statement that 'the heathen, in his blindness, bows down to wood and stone' comprised accurately the sum of our knowledge. That there could be any but the vaguest likeness between them and our own beliefs was unimaginable. Possibly there was a belief in the Fatherhood of some supreme being, some vague conception of a future life; while sacrificial rites, as we knew, were not peculiar to the Jews. But the other doctrines of our Creed we regarded as exclusively our own. *The ideas of a Triune God-head, of an Incarnate Saviour, of the Virgin Birth, of the Second Advent, of the Sacraments, of the Communion of Saints*—these seemed to be the distinctive possessions of Christianity; these were marks clearly dividing it from any form of paganism. So, at least, we imagined. [Had we not every reason thus to imagine on the authority of Holy Scripture?] But it proves that *we were completely mistaken. The modern study of primitive religion shows that every one of these beliefs is, or has been, held in some part or other of the pagan world quite independently of Christian influence*, and that, while we are bound to speak of these beliefs as, in a sense, distinctly Christian, *to term them exclusively Christian is no longer possible*.....In these early mythologies we can discern the longing for a personal God, capable of direct communication with man, and for some sort of union between the divine and human natures. Whence did these instincts themselves originate? *The one tenable reply seems to be that they were God-implanted*.....The Zoroastrian anticipates the advent

of a 'Saviour' (Saoshyas), who will end the strife between good and evil, personified as Ormuzd and Ahriman, by sweeping away evil from the earth. In the ancient Vedic and Scandinavian religions, in the Old-World creeds of Egypt and Babylon, in the legends of Mexico and Polynesia, is found, in a variety of guises, the same fundamental idea. Always there is a sense of a supremely righteous Power; of a world tainted with evil, and out of harmony with the Power above it; of the coming of some Deliverer, who will establish a kingdom of righteousness. Once more, in many mythologies the idea of a Virgin Birth is associated with that of a Divine Incarnation. Men felt instinctively that the entrance of a Divine Being into the human race must take place in a miraculous way. And thus the Spirit of God, working by means of what we may term the instinctive feelings of mankind, prepared the human race throughout the world for the coming of the Son of God, to be born of a pure Virgin, to take our nature upon Him for evermore, and to redeem us from the power of sin.....We find conceptions, such as that of the Hindu *Trimurti*, which seem to remember the doctrine of the Trinity. In the sacramental meals of totem-worship, when a sacred animal is killed, and partaken of by the worshippers in order that its power may be communicated to them [not to mention "sacred" *men* killed with the same idea], there seems a dim anticipation of the highest Christian rite. Baptism as a cleansing and symbolical ceremony was known centuries before the Christian era.....These rites and beliefs, obscured by superstition and insufficient to satisfy the longing which brought them into existence, were designed to serve as the schoolmasters who would lead

the heathen at length to Christ" (cf. Galatians iii. 24).

These remarks, by a clergyman of the Church of England, will enable the ordinary person, who for the most part knows nothing whatever about these things, to realise the immense importance of the questions raised by Comparative Mythology.

## § 2. *Parallels in Ancient Religions, and Some Remarks Upon Them.*

Before proceeding any further, it will be advisable to consider some concrete examples of the parallels between the beliefs and teachings of ancient religions and those of the Christian religion.

### KRISHNA AND BUDDHA.

*Krishna.*—Krishna was a miraculous incarnation of Vishnu in the womb of Devaki. A chorus of angels exclaimed: "In the delivery of this favoured woman nature shall have cause to exult." The birth was indicated in the heavens by a star. On the morning of his birth the spirits of heaven danced and sang, and the clouds emitted low, pleasing sounds. Though royally descended, he was actually born in a cave.[1] The divine child was recognised and adored by cowherds. He was presented with gifts of sandalwood and perfumes. The holy Indian prophet, Nared, paid him a visit, consulted the stars and declared him to be of celestial descent. His birth was beset by peril, and his foster father was warned by a heavenly voice to fly with the child, as the reigning monarch, King Kansa, might take his life. The king ordered the massacre in all his

[1] See Appendix.

States of all the male children born during the night of the birth of Krishna. One of the first miracles performed by Krishna, when mature, was the curing of a leper. A lame woman came with a vessel filled with spices and sweet oil, and anointed his head. Krishna was slain. At his death a black circle surrounded the moon, and the sun was darkened at noonday. Spirits were to be seen on all sides. Krishna descended into hell, rose again from the dead, and ascended bodily into heaven, many persons witnessing his ascent. He is to come again on earth in the latter days. He will appear as an armed warrior riding a white horse. At his approach the sun and moon will be darkened, the earth will tremble, and the stars fall from the firmament (compare Rev. vi. 2, 12, 13). He is to judge the dead at the last day. Krishna is the Creator of all things visible and invisible, and is the beginning, middle, and end of all things. Krishna was transfigured before his beloved disciple, Arjuna. Krishna was the meekest of beings. He preached sublimely. According to the purer Vaishnava faith, he was pure and chaste in reality; any amorousness related of him is to be explained allegorically, as symbolising the longing of the human soul for the Supreme; just as the amorous "Song of Solomon" is said to be allegorical, and to mean "Christ's love for his Church." Krishna even condescended to wash the feet of the Brahmins. He is the incarnation of Vishnu, the second person in the Hindoo Trinity of Brahma, Vishnu, and Siva; and Vishnu in his incarnations is a saviour, protector, and friend. Krishna said: "Let a man, if seeking God by deep abstraction, abandon his possessions and his hopes, betake himself to some

secluded spot, and fix his heart and thoughts on God alone." And, again: "Then be not sorrowful; from all thy sins I will deliver thee." Many other such remarkable passages might be adduced from the Bhagavadgita. Justice, humanity, good faith, compassion, disinterestedness—in fact, all the virtues—are said to have been taught by Krishna, both by precept and example; but we must remember, as Monier Williams informs us in his *Hinduism*, that Krishna, in the ancient epic poems, is simply a great hero, and it is not until about the fourth century B.C. that he is deified and declared to be an incarnation of Vishnu. In conclusion, the accounts of Krishna's childhood agree very closely with the apocryphal accounts of Christ's childhood.

*Buddha.*—If the similarity between the histories of Krishna and Jesus is remarkable, what shall we say of that between the mythological[1] portions of the history of Gautama Buddha and the history of Jesus? Looked upon as a confirmation of Progressive Revelation, it is nothing short of marvellous, whether we regard the similarity in events, characters, actions, or sayings. From Buddha's divine incarnation until his ascension into the celestial regions, almost every important episode of the life of Christ appears to be paralleled. Attendant miraculous events, spotless character, wonderful doings, cherished sayings—all are here.

1 "We are accustomed to find the legendary and the miraculous gathering, like a halo, around the early history of religious leaders, until the sober truth runs the risk of being altogether neglected for the glittering and edifying falsehood" (*Enc. Brit.*, vol. iv., art. "Buddhism," p. 424). This process is recognised as a universal rule. What grounds have we for assuming that Christianity is exempt from it?

Buddha was miraculously[1] born of the pure and holy Maya. He descended into her womb from heaven in a spiritual manner. There was joy in heaven, the Devas singing: "To-day Bodhisatwa is born on earth, to give joy and peace to men and Devas." He was recognised by the aged and devout Asita as the perfect Buddha come to the world for its salvation. His life was threatened by the King Bimbisara, who was advised to destroy the child. He was presented in the temple. When still a mere child he was found to be as proficient as his masters, and he disputed with learned doctors. His ancestry was traced from his father to Maha Sammata, the first monarch of the world. He bathed in water, the spirits making their presence known as he did so. When about to adopt a religious life, he fasted for a long time, and was tempted by Mara, the author of Evil; but he heeded not the words of the Evil One, and bade him depart from him. The heavens showed their appreciation of this defeat by raining flowers. Towards the end of his life he was transfigured when on a mountain in India called Pandava. He performed great miracles. For instance, on one occasion he floated through the air across a river; and, on another, he caused a tempest to cease, and so saved a disciple, who was in imminent danger of shipwreck. Shortly before his death a weeping woman embraced his feet. When Buddha died many miracles occurred. The coffin was opened, and the body uncovered, supernaturally. He promised that another Buddha would be sent to them. He foretold his departure, and after death entered Nirvana. He was very early regarded as omniscient and absolutely sinless.

[1] See Appendix.

Earth and heaven did homage to him at birth and death. A great earthquake occurred at his Temptation. He is represented as saying: "Let all the sins that are committed in the world fall upon me, that the world may be delivered"; and again: "Hide your good deeds, and confess before the world the sins you have committed"; and again: "Though the great world be swallowed up and pass away, yet be assured the words of Buddha are true"; and again: "Beware of fixing your eyes upon women"; "A wise man should avoid unchaste life, as if it were a burning pit of live coals"; "One who is not able to live in a state of celibacy should not commit adultery." According to Buddha, the motives of all our actions should be pity, or love for our neighbour. Those who became his disciples were told they must renounce the world, give up their riches, and take the vow of poverty. Finally, we should note that Buddha aimed to establish a "Kingdom of Heaven" (Dharmachakra); that the account given by St. Peter (Ep. ii., ch. 3) of the earth once destroyed by water, and about to be destroyed by fire, is in agreement with the Buddhist story; and that the Jews believed in the pre-existence of souls and a modified form of metempsychosis (transmigration of the soul).

It is difficult to separate fiction from fact; but the generally accepted records show that, together with superior natural endowments, Gautama Buddha attained to an exceptional purity of life and integrity of purpose. Probably he never arrogated to himself any higher authority than that of a teacher; but his followers, turning for consolation to the theory that he still lived, exalted him, within a quarter of a century of his death, to a place among their deities.

As already mentioned, he was very early regarded as omniscient and absolutely sinless.[1] All sorts of legends, borrowed from current myths, attach themselves to the story of his life, while his teaching as a simple-hearted, truth-seeking philanthropist became encrusted with the superstitions and religious speculations that were current. As with Krishna, so here there are stories of Buddha's childhood of which the apocryphal stories of Christ's childhood are an almost exact reproduction.

### PARALLELS OTHER THAN KRISHNA AND BUDDHA.

In the case of Krishna and Buddha it is contended by some Christian writers that the stories must have been borrowed from Christian sources both canonical and apocryphal. This contention, founded on the lateness of the mythical stories in literary form, will be considered in due course; but first let us have clearly before our minds those parallels concerning which there is no such contention, for the simple reason that there is no getting away from the fact that the beliefs existed long before the advent of Christ. In ancient religions other than Hindooism and Buddhism, there are, among many others, distinct parallels to—the Virgin Birth; the Heavenly Choir; the Epiphany; the Slaughter of the Innocents; the Temptation and Forty Days' Fast; the Miracles; the Crucifixion Darkness, and Descent into Hell; the Resurrection and Ascension; the Second Coming and Day of Judgment.

*The Virgin Birth.*—According to Chinese legends, the sages Fohi (? 3468 B.C.) and Lao-Kiun (about 600 B.C.

[1] See Appendix.

were born of virgins. Dean Milman mentions in his *History of Christianity* that the first Jesuit missionaries, who went to China were appalled at finding in the mythology of that country a counterpart of the story of the Virgin. In Persia, Zoroaster,[1] the founder of the Perso-Iranian national religion, was miraculously conceived. All attempts to connect him with Hebrew influences are groundless. In Egypt, Horus, who had the epithet of Saviour, was born of the virgin Isis. The Egyptian Bible, remember, is the oldest in the world! Plutarch mentions the notion of the Egyptians that a woman might conceive by the approach of some divine spirit. Egyptian monuments represent the infant saviour in the arms of his virgin mother, or sitting on her knee. The image of the child was worshipped just as the Bambino is worshipped in Rome to-day. Women then, as now, believed in its efficacy for their relief in time of nature's sorrows. In Grecian and Roman mythology the "Sons of Jove"—Hercules, Bacchus, Amphion, Perseus, Mercury, Æolus, Apollo, and others—have mortal mothers. Speaking of this, the Christian Father, Justin Martyr, declared that the myths regarding the multitude of sons of gods, and especially the myth regarding the virgin's son Perseus, had been invented by the demons in order to rob the manifestation of Jesus, the true Son of God, of its importance. He also insisted that, with their doctrine of the Virgin-birth of Jesus, of His passion, and of His ascension, the Christians were affirming nothing new

[1] Zarathustra, or Zoroaster, was possibly a historical person. We are quite in the dark as to the precise date of Zoroaster. Duncker places him about the year 1000 B.C.

as compared with what was alleged of the so-called sons of Zeus.[1] Even regarding Plato there was a legend that his mother, Perictione, had experienced a miraculous conception through the influences of the God Apollo, and that the God had declared to Aris, to whom she was betrothed, the parentage of the child (compare St. Matthew i. 20). This was believed in by the disciples of Plato centuries before the Christian era. Among northern nations the sons of Odin take the place of the sons of Jove. Thus "Baldur the Good," the Beneficent Saviour, was the son of Odin and Friga. The worship of Friga was continued until that of the Virgin Mary took its place. In Mexico, the "Saviour" Quetzalcoatl was born of a pure virgin, who was called the "Queen of Heaven." An ambassador from heaven announced to the virgin Sochiquetzal, mother of Quetzalcoatl, that it was the will of God that she should conceive a son without connection with man. Here we have an exact parallel to the annunciation of the Virgin Mary (St. Luke i. 26–35), in a part of the globe that was not discovered by Christians till nearly 1,500 years after the birth of Christ! Similar traditions of Saviours are found among various tribes of North and South America.

Regarding the tendency to believe in incarnations, Dr. Illingworth[2] explains that "a general tendency in the human mind to expect a thing cannot possibly be twisted into a presumption against its occurrence..... The fact of the expectation does not logically make invention a likelier alternative than occurrence, except upon one hypothesis—namely, that the occurrence

[1] Apol. I. 54 and I. 21. Quoted in the *Enc. Bib.*, art. "Mary."
[2] Pp. 78–9 of his important work, *Divine Immanence*.

is impossible." This argument skims over—or, I might almost say, neglects—the real contention of the Rationalist. Let us assume that incarnation is not ruled out of court as being *à priori* impossible; the virgin-birth of Jesus was subsequently invented by the Christian Church because its eminent suitability necessitated its invention. Only thus could the divinity and sinlessness of Jesus Christ be firmly established. More especially would this be the case in an age when everyone was familiar with the notion of virgin-born Saviours. The minds of men were deeply imbued with the idea of miraculous birth in the case of anyone claiming to be of divine origin. Only on this understanding would the heathen, already believing in their own virgin-born Saviours, have accepted Christianity.

*The Heavenly Choir.*—Even Confucius, the celebrated philosopher (born 551 B.C.), was ushered into the world with dragons and angels hovering about the couch, and with the sound of heavenly music in the air. At the birth of Osiris, the father of Horus, another Egyptian "Saviour," a voice was heard proclaiming that the "Ruler of all the earth is born." There was joy in Olympus when Apollo was born, and at the time of the birth of Hercules his father Zeus spake from heaven, and said: "This day shall a child be born of the race of Perseus, who shall be the mightiest of the sons of men."

*The Epiphany.*—Legends of the coming of wise men to see an infant grew up in various places. Krishna was visited by sages who brought perfumes. Confucius has a somewhat similar legend, and one occurs even in connection with the birth of Plato.

*The Slaughter of the Innocents.*—The story of the

"dangerous child" is almost universal. Horus, Zoroaster, and Bacchus, for example, were "dangerous" children.

*The Forty Days' Fast and the Temptation.*—According to Pliny, Zoroaster lived for thirty years in the wilderness upon cheese. The Devil made Zoroaster magnificent promises; but the temptations were in vain. The ancient Persians had a religious festival, which they annually celebrated, called the "Salutation of Mithras (the sun-god)," and during it *forty days* were set apart for sacrifice and thanksgiving. Among the ancient Egyptians the priest submitted to abstinence of the most severe description. "The priests in Heliopolis," says Plutarch, "have many fasts, during which they meditate upon divine things." Fasting and self-denial were observances required of the Greeks who desired initiation into the mysteries. The same practice was found among the ancient Mexicans and Peruvians. The Mexicans had a *forty days'* fast, in memory of Quetzalcoatl, who was tempted and fasted *forty days* on a mountain. Lord Kingsborough says: "The temptation of Quetzalcoatl and the fast of forty days.....are very curious and mysterious."[1] Mr. Bonwick says: "The Spaniards were surprised to see the Mexicans keep the vernal forty days' fast."[2]

Turning to the Old Testament, we may remind ourselves that Moses went up into a mountain to receive certain instructions from God, and "was there with the Lord *forty days and forty nights*, and he did neither eat bread nor drink water." On a second occasion, when he received the Ten Commandments,

[1] *Mexican Antiquities*, vol. vi., pp. 197-200.
[2] *Egyptian Belief*, p. 370.

he was again with the Lord *forty days and forty nights*, and did neither eat bread nor drink water. Elijah fled to the desert, where an angel gave him cake and water, and in the strength of that meat he went for *forty days* without food. The number "forty" occurs over and over again in that portion of the Old Testament which the Higher Criticism has shown to be unhistorical. The Rationalist avers that the number "forty" is mythological, and that we have this story of the Forty Days' Fast and the Temptation in the New Testament because the writer wishes to show that Jesus Christ was proof against all temptation; that He, too, as well as other Christs, could resist the powers of the Prince of Evil. It may be urged that in all these cases the number is quite immaterial. Are we not, then, to take the author of "The Acts" literally when he informs us that Christ spent *forty days* on earth after His resurrection?

*The Miracles.*—Not only Krishna and Buddha, but all leaders of religious movements, had the reputation of having performed miracles. Religions were established as much by the miracles as by the preachings. Miracles were needed in those days on all special occasions. Many of them are attested in the gravest manner by the gravest writers, and were firmly believed at the time by the people. Healing miracles, such as those performed by Jesus, were the commonest of all. The Gospel miracles are in no respect singular or more wonderful. Horus, as well as Krishna, *raised the dead to life.* Bacchus *changed water into wine.* Æsculapius not only cured the sick, but *raised the dead.* Pausanias, the eminent Greek geographer and historian, writes that in the temple of Æsculapius at Epidaurus there was an old pillar dedicated to the

memory of Hippolytus, who had been *raised from the dead.*[1] Apollonius of Tyana was celebrated for the wonderful miracles he performed. He caused a devil to depart out of a youth, and he *restored a dead maiden to life.* The Christian Fathers inform us that Simon Magus, with the Devil's aid, could make his appearance wherever he pleased at any moment; could poise himself in the air; produce trees from the earth suddenly [the mango tree trick?]; fling himself from high precipices unhurt [the very feat suggested by the Devil in the Temptation]; and walk through the streets accompanied by spirits of the dead. Tacitus, the celebrated Roman historian, tells us that the Emperor Vespasian (born 9 A.D.) performed wonderful miracles for the good of mankind, and among others he describes the *cure of a blind man with the emperor's spittle.*

*The Atonement.*—In China the Holy One (Tien) dies to save the world. "The sufferings and death of Osiris were the great mystery of the Egyptian religion. His being the divine goodness, and the abstract idea of 'good,' his manifestation upon earth (like an Indian god), his death and resurrection, and his office as judge of the dead in a future life, look like the early revelation of a future manifestation of the deity converted into a mythological fable."[2] While Osiris is the judge, Horus, his son, is the mediator. In the Judgment scene in the Book of the Dead, Horus, the son of Isis, leads the deceased, after his heart has been weighed, into the presence of Osiris (see Papyrus of Ani, plates 3 & 4). Mithras, the sun-god of the Persians, was a "Mediator" between God and men —the "Saviour," who, by his laborious conflicts,

[1] Middleton's *Works*, vol. i., pp. 63, 64.
[2] Rawlinson's *Herodotus*, vol. ii., p. 260, note 3.

worked their salvation. He was also called the "Word." Attys, called the "Only Begotten Son" and the "Saviour," was worshipped by the Phrygians, and represented by them as a man tied or nailed to a tree. Adonis was another virgin-born "Saviour" who suffered for mankind. The yearly festival of Adonis in the spring was a special favourite with women. In the Old Testament reference is made to the weeping of the women over Tammuz, the Babylonian equivalent of Adonis (Ezekiel viii. 14). According to the Rev. Sir G. W. Cox,[1] he was the crucified Tao (divine love personified). The Rev. Dr. Parkhurst, in the chapter on the Resurrection in his Hebrew lexicon, says: "I find myself obliged to refer Tammuz to that class of idols which were originally designed to represent the promised Saviour, the desire of all nations." Prometheus was a Saviour who suffered the most fearful tortures as the friend of the human race. Æschylus's tragedy, *Prometheus Vinctus*, was acted in Athens *five hundred years before the Christian era*. Even Bacchus, whom most of us think of as the rollicking wine-god of classical mythology, was a slain Saviour.

When we turn to the New World we find the worship of a crucified Saviour among the ancient Mexicans and Peruvians. Lord Kingsborough tells us that, according to the belief of the ancient Mexicans, "the death of Quetzalcoatl *upon the cross*" was "an atonement for the sins of mankind."[2] Dr. Daniel Brinton relates how the Aztecs had a feast which they celebrated *in the early spring*, when "victims were

[1] See his work, *Mythology of the Aryan Nations*, vol. ii., p. 113.
[2] *Mexican Antiquities*, vol. vi., p. 95.

nailed to a cross and shot with an arrow."[1] Alexander von Humboldt, in his *American Researches*, also speaks of a feast, at which the Mexicans *crucified* a man and *pierced* him with an arrow. The Rev. J. P. Lundy, speaking of this, says: "Here is the old story of Prometheus crucified on the Caucasus, and of all other pagan crucifixions of the young incarnate divinities of India, Persia, Asia Minor, and Egypt."[2]

*Moral Teaching.*—There is not only an extraordinary similarity in beliefs, but also in moral teachings. The teachings of Confucius, Mencius, and Wang Yang Ming might, as Professor Nitobe points out,[3] just as well be considered plagiarisms from the Divine library, for they furnish numerous remarkable parallels to the New Testament teaching. Taoism, the philosophy of Laotze, for a long time successfully rivalled the more utilitarian system of Confucius, and its close agreement with many of the teachings of Christ is most noticeable. The morals of the ancient Egyptians are clearly set forth in the Book of the Dead, which came into use after 2000 B.C. They indicate a far higher standard than existed in Israel in David's time. "Yet," as Dr. Callaway remarks,[4] "in traditions which still linger among us, the law under which David lived and reigned was perfect and divine; while the name of Egypt stands for darkness and sin."

With regard to the parallels in the moral teaching, Dean Farrar, in his work, *Seekers after God*, has

[1] *Myths of the New World*, p. 166.
[2] P. 393 of *Monumental Christianity, or the Art and Symbolism of the Primitive Church as Witness and Teachers of the One Catholic Faith and Practice.*
[3] In his book, *Bushido*, pp. 15-19 and 24.
[4] P. 152 of his book, *King David of Israel* (Watts, 1905).

clearly shown that "to say that pagan morality kindled its faded taper at the Gospel light, whether furtively or unconsciously, that it dissembled the obligation and made a boast of the splendour, as if it were originally her own, is to make an assertion wholly untenable." He points out that the attempts of the Christian Fathers to make out Pythagoras a debtor to Hebraic wisdom, Plato an "Atticising Moses," Aristotle a learner of ethics from a Jew, Seneca a correspondent of St. Paul, were due "in some cases to ignorance, in some to a want of perfect honesty in controversial dealing."

*Apocryphal Gospels.*—We are assured by Christian writers that the parallels between the accounts of Krishna's and Buddha's childhood and those in the apocryphal gospels of Christ's childhood are due to the Hindoos having borrowed legends current among the early Christians. Dr. Wallis Budge, the keeper of Egyptian and Assyrian antiquities in the British Museum, informs us, however, that "several of the incidents of the wanderings of the Virgin with the child in Egypt, as recorded in the Apocryphal Gospels, reflect scenes in the life of Isis as described in the texts found on the Metternich Stele."[1] And, again, he says: "In the apocryphal literature of the first six centuries which followed the evangelisation of Egypt, several of the legends about Isis and her sorrowful wanderings were made to centre round the mother of Christ."[2] The evidence is conclusive that certain legends prevalent among the early Christians were borrowed from the ancient Egyptian religion; yet we are to believe that where the Krishna and Buddha

[1] *The Gods of the Egyptians*, vol. ii., p. 220.
[2] *Ibid.*, vol. i., Preface, p. xv.

parallels are concerned the borrowing process was the other way! So be it. Let us suppose that certain Egyptian superstitions reached the Hindoo through the medium of the Christian; the fact remains that beliefs once held by devout but unlettered Christians have a heathen origin. This is of serious import, for it lends weight to the suspicion that the marvellous tales in the canonical gospels have been similarly derived from heathen legends—legends from which some of the more glaring absurdities and all that would mar the ethical ideals of the Christian religion were eclectically expunged.

### ARE THE KRISHNA AND BUDDHA LEGENDS BORROWED FROM CHRISTIANITY?

I have indicated a few of the more striking parallels in other religions besides Krishnaism and Buddhism. Did space permit, it could be shown that there are also parallels to the teaching of Christ, the darkness at the Crucifixion, the descent into Hell, the Resurrection, the claim of Jesus Christ to be "Alpha and Omega" (according to the Revelation of St. John), the prophecy of the Second Coming, the Sacrament of the Lord's Supper, the doctrine of the Trinity, the worship of the Blessed Virgin, the Christian symbols (cross, triangle, I.H.S., fish, serpent, dove, and lamb). I cannot understand what the Christian cause can gain by ascribing the parallels in Hindoo mythology to Christian sources, when there is all this mass of evidence for parallels that are quite as extraordinary (though less numerous) in those ancient religions where the priority to Christianity cannot reasonably be denied. Certainly the

Krishna and Buddha parallels are extremely numerous and strikingly exact; but a policy which seeks to explain them in a different manner from that adopted in the case of the same phenomena in other religions, while it serves to confirm the suspicions of the sceptic, is doomed eventually to failure. This being so, it is unnecessary, I think, to enter at any great length into the controversy.

In Mr. J. M. Robertson's book, *Christianity and Mythology*, there is a scholarly investigation from which I extract the following leading points[1]:— Hindoos, as Professor Tiele urges, could perfectly well have borrowed, if they did borrow, from Egypt before Christianity was heard of. There is hardly a leading detail in the Krishna birth legend which is not variously paralleled in other early non-Christian mythology. The more we collate the main Christian myth-notions with those of Krishnaism, the more clearly does it appear that, instead of the latter being borrowed from the former, they are, not indeed the originals from which Christianity borrowed, but always presumptively the more ancient, and in one or two cases they do appear to be the actual sources of Gospel stories. The lateness of the Purânic stories in literary form is no argument against their antiquity. Scholars are agreed that late documents often preserve extremely old myth-material. The leading elements in the Krishna myth are inexplicable save on the view that the cultus is ancient. The close coincidences in the legends of Krishna and Buddha are to be explained in terms of borrowing by the latter from the former, and not *vice versa*.

[1] They appear in Part II., pp. 171, 183, 188, 300, and 302.

I should add here that the denial of the "Christian accretions" theory does not convey also the implication that the Bible story was borrowed from the Krishna and Buddha myths. On the contrary, the strong probability is that there has been little or no borrowing either way—that there is a common source for both in earlier Aryan and Semitic myths.

In the Introduction to his standard work, *The Romantic History of Buddha*,[1] Mr. Beal refers to the legends concerning the pre-existence of Buddha in heaven—his miraculous incarnation—salutation by angels—recognition by Asita (Simeon)—presentation in the Temple—baptism by fire and water—disputation with doctors—temptation in the wilderness—life passed in preaching and working miracles, etc.—and frankly admits that, "if we could prove that they were unknown in the East for some centuries after Christ, the explanation would be easy; but all the evidence we have goes to prove the contrary." Regarding the parallelisms with the Apocryphal Gospels, he says: "It would be a natural inference that many of the events in the legend of Buddha were borrowed from the Apocryphal Gospels (compare, for example, the *Gospel of the Infancy*, chap. xx.: 'Our Lord learning his alphabet,' with the account given in chap. xi. of this volume), if we were quite certain that these Apocryphal Gospels had not borrowed from it." In his later work, *Buddhist Literature*, Mr. Beal modifies his position.

Neither Max Müller in his *Introduction to the Science of Religion*, nor Forlong in his *Short Studies of the Science of Comparative Religions*, nor Senart in his

[1] A translation of the Chinese version of the "Abhinishkramana Sûtra." For the probable date, see Appendix.

learned work, *La Légende du Buddha*, nor Seydel in his *Evangelium von Jesu* and his *Buddha Legends*, nor Pfleiderer in his *Urchristentum*, supports the theory of Christian accretions. Bunsen, in his *Angel-Messiah*, maintains (p. 18) "that, according to Sanscrit and Chinese scriptures and the stone-cut edicts of Asoka and the Senchi Tope, certain legends about Buddha circulated in India and China, not only before the apostolic age, but more than three centuries earlier," and that "among these legends the most ancient are those which refer to the incarnation of Buddha as the Angel Messiah."

On page 10 of Rhys Davids' well-known little work, *Buddhism* (published under the direction of the S.P.C.K.), we read: "There is every reason to believe that the Pitakas now extant in Ceylon are substantially identical with the books of the Orthodox Canon, as settled at the Council of Patna about the year 250 B.C. As no works would have been received into the canon which were not then believed to be very old, the Pitakas may be approximately placed in the fourth century B.C., and parts of them possibly read back very nearly, if not quite, to the time of Gautama himself." On page 15 it is explained that, when the statements in the Sanscrit and Pali texts agree, the greatest reliance may be placed upon them, "not indeed as to the actual facts of Gautama's life, but as to the belief of the early Buddhists concerning it." Professor Rhys Davids enumerates the more important of these early beliefs, and they include many of the startling coincidences which I have noticed. The later beliefs he passes over for the most part in silence; but, speaking generally, he is of opinion that the greater portion, if not all, of the

legends could be explained by hero-worship, mere poetical imagery, misapprehension, the desire to edify, applications to Gautama of previously existing stories or sun-myths, and so on. Nowhere does he state or imply that in any of the legends, early *or late*, there can be any application to Gautama of the Gospel stories of the life of Christ; while he considers M. Senart's theory of the almost complete dependence of the Buddha legends on solar myths "most interesting." Now, it is just those very ideas of virgin-birth, resurrection, and ascension appearing in the later legends which were nothing more nor less than solar myths. In any case, whatever their origin, they were world-wide very many centuries before the Christian era; so any argument from the lateness of these legends is founded upon sand. In his *Buddhism*, as also in his article on Buddhism in the *Encyclopædia Britannica*, the Professor steers clear of the question of the parallels; but in his *Buddhist Suttas*, translated by him from the Pali and appearing in the "Sacred Books of the East" series, we read (in the Introduction, p. 165) that while he "ventures to disagree with writers who argue that the resemblances in the Pali Pitakas and passages in the New Testament indicate that the New Testament as the later must be borrowed," he holds that the resemblance is due *not to any borrowing on the one side or the other*, but "solely to the similarity of the conditions under which the two movements grew" [and, the Rationalist would add, a similarity in the myths afloat is a part, and a very essential part, of the similarity of the conditions].

So also with regard to the lateness of the Krishna legends in literary form, it is futile to argue that they

are, to use a familiar term, cribbed from the canonical and apocryphal gospels, when most of them are obviously plagiarisms of the ancient sun-myths. The Rev. Sir G. W. Cox, speaking on this subject in his *Aryan Mythology*, says: "There is no more room for inferring foreign influence in the growth of any of these myths than, as Bunsen rightly insists, there is room for tracing Christian influence in the early epical literature of the Teutonic tribes. Practically the myths of Krishna seem to have been fully developed in the days of Megasthenes (fourth century B.C.), who identifies him with the Greek Hercules." [Megasthenes wrote a work on India, which was the chief source of the later Greek information on the subject.] Professor Monier Williams, the accepted authority on Hinduism, writing for the S.P.G., in his book, *Indian Wisdom*, and speaking of the *Bhagavad-gita*, says: "It may reasonably be questioned whether there could have been any actual contact of the Hindoo system with Christianity without a more satisfactory result in the modification of Pantheistic and anti-Christian ideas." Again, he says: "The religious creeds, rites, customs, and habits of thought of the Hindoos generally had altered little since the days of Menu, 500 years B.C." In his *Hinduism* (p. 19) he shows that "we may be justified in assuming that the hymns of the Veda were probably composed by a succession of poets at different dates between 1500 and 1000 years B.C." This is an important concession, because the ancient hymns of the Veda furnish the germs of those sun-myths which tell of the death, resurrection, and ascension of a virgin-born saviour.

Whatever may be thought of the conclusions of the

highest authorities regarding Krishnaistic and Buddhistic beliefs, I hope I may have so far carried the reader with me that he will be prepared to admit that there are very many striking resemblances to the Gospel stories in those ancient beliefs whose priority to Christianity is not disputed. Now that these resemblances are no longer attributed to a device of the Evil One, an explanation for them is urgently required. The explanation from the Christian side is the theory of a Progressive Revelation; and, apparently, there can be no other, if Christianity be true. The reader has been put in possession of a few details of the remarkable parallels, and he should apply this theory for himself to each and all of them, and see whether it furnishes a fair working hypothesis, whether his mind can accept the explanation now offered to him, and, I might almost add, whether he can honestly continue to call himself a Christian believer. Let him ask himself which is the more probable, that in the common mythos we have marvellous anticipations of the Bible stories, or that in the latter we have reproductions of the former?

### § 3. *Parallels in the Beliefs of Primitive Man, and some Remarks Upon Them.*

I must ask the reader's patience if I postpone my final remarks on Progressive Revelation until I have adduced some illustrations of the beliefs and customs of primitive man, as here also this same theory has to apply. Thus far the pagan beliefs have appeared to be of a comparatively harmless character; but this can by no means be said of the beliefs of savage man. He does not confine himself, like his more

civilised brother, to mystical beliefs in Saviours who once upon a time suffered for him, and whose body and blood are to be *symbolically* assimilated; but, being of a realistic (or shall we say materialistic?) turn of mind, he prefers (the inevitable result of a restricted intellectual development)[1] to satisfy his religious emotions with the spectacle of a real human-divine sufferer, and by a sacrificial feast of real flesh and blood. Can this be God's method of revealing Himself? True, the religious convictions of civilised man have been a fruitful source of human agony, both physical and mental, in many a bloody fight and massacre, in cruel and relentless persecutions, in every refinement of excruciating torture and pitiable distress to body and mind; but it is possible to gloze over all this with various specious arguments. It is not so easy to do so with examples drawn from the history of savage races. The only thing is that so few have ever had these examples brought before them, or, at least, have ever thought of connecting them with anything that has to do with the truth of Christianity. I shall, therefore, now give some illustrations of the beliefs and customs of primitive man. A vivid description may succeed in convincing the reader of the absurdity of the new theory, where mere vague ideas of savage ritual would fail. "Of the human sacrifices of rude peoples, those of the Mexicans are perhaps the most instructive, for in them the theanthropic character of the victim comes out most clearly."[2] "When we go to the records of the cultures

[1] See Herbert Spencer's *Principles of Sociology*, Vol. I., Part I., chapter on "The Primitive Man—Emotional."

[2] Professor Robertson Smith, in *The Religion of the Semites*, p. 347. Dr. W. R. Smith was a distinguished Scottish Biblical scholar

and creeds of Mexico and Peru, records wonderfully preserved in the teeth of the fanaticism which would have destroyed them all if it could, we stand clear of the frauds and prejudices alike of Jew and Christian. .....We are faced by a civilisation and a religion that reached wealth and complexity by normal evolution from the stages of early savagery and barbarism without ever coming in contact with those of Europe till the moment of collision and destruction."[1] We shall begin, therefore, with the ancient American.

### THE RELIGIONS OF ANCIENT AMERICA.

"Terrible was the prestige of the priesthood of Mexico. The greater the State grew, the larger were the hecatombs of human victims. Almost every god had to be propitiated in the same way; but above all must the war-god be for ever glutted with the smoking hearts of slain captives. Scarcely any historian, says Prescott, estimates the number of human beings sacrificed yearly throughout the Empire at less than 20,000, and some make it 50,000. The Franciscan monks computed that 2,500 victims were annually sacrificed in the town and district of Mexico alone. Of this doomed host, Huitzilopochtli had the lion's share; and it is recorded that at the dedication of his great new temple A.D. 1486 [that is to say, nearly 1,500 years after God was pleased to reveal Himself definitely to mankind] there were slain in his honour 70,000 prisoners of war, who had been reserved for the purpose for years throughout the Empire. They formed a

and Orientalist. From 1881 he was associated as joint editor of the ninth edition of the *Encyclopædia Britannica* with Professor Spencer Baynes, after whose death in 1887 he was sole editor.

[1] J. M. Robertson, in his book, *Pagan Christs*, pp. 373-4.

train two miles long, and the work of priestly butchery went on for several days."[1]

"At every festival of the God there was a new hecatomb of victims, and we may conceive how the chronic spectacle burnt itself in on the imagination of the people.....And then the horror of the sacrificial act! In the great majority of the sacrifices the victim was laid living on the convex stone and held by the limbs, while the slayer cut open his breast with the sacred flint (or rather obsidian) knife—the ancient knife used before men had the use of metals, and therefore most truly religious—and tore out the palpitating heart, which was held on high to the all-seeing sun, before being set to burn in incense in front of the idol, whose lips, and the walls of whose shrines, were devoutly daubed with blood."

"In connection with one annual festival of Tezcatlipoca, the Creator and 'soul of the world,' who combined the attributes of perpetual youthful beauty with the function of the God of Justice and Retribution, as the Winter Sun, there was selected for immolation a young male captive of especial beauty, who was treated with great reverence for a whole year before being sacrificed.....When all was over the priests piously improved the occasion, preaching that all this had been typical of human destiny, while the aristocracy sacramentally ate the victim's roasted limbs."

"They [Christians] mystically eat the body of the slain God. Now, this very act was performed by the Mexicans, not only literally as we have seen, but in

[1] For this and the following graphic accounts I am indebted to Mr. J. M. Robertson's book, *Pagan Christs*, Part IV.—"The Religion of Ancient America."

the symbolic way also; and they connected their sacraments with the symbol of the *cross*."

"That the Mexicans were no longer cannibals by taste is shown by the fact that in the great siege by Cortez they died of starvation by thousands. They never ate fellow citizens: only the sacrificially slain captive."

"The strangest thing of all is that their frightful system of sacrifice was bound up not only with a strict and ascetic sexual morality, but with an emphatic humanitarian doctrine. If asceticism be virtue, they cultivated virtue zealously. There was a Mexican Goddess of Love, and there was of course plenty of vice; but nowhere could men win a higher reputation for sanctity by living in celibacy. Their saints were numerous. They had nearly all the formulas of Christian morality, so-called. The priests themselves mostly lived in strict celibacy; and they educated children with the greatest vigilance in their temple schools and higher colleges. They taught the people to be peaceful, to bear injuries with meekness, to rely on God's mercy and not on their own merits; they taught, like Jesus and the Pagans, that adultery could be committed by the eyes and the heart; and, above all, they exhorted men to feed the poor. The public hospitals were carefully attended to, at a time when some Christian countries had none. They had the practice of confession and absolution, and in the regular exhortation of the confessor there was this formula: Clothe the naked and feed the hungry, whatever privations it may cost thee; for remember their flesh is like thine, and they are men like thee; cherish the sick, for they are the image of God. And in this very same exhortation there was further urged

on the penitent the special duty of instantly *procuring a slave for sacrifice to the deity.*"

The Mexican believed in the resurrection of the Man-God. Dr. Frazer relates how "the idea that the God thus slain in the person of his representative comes to life again immediately was graphically represented in the Mexican ritual by skinning the slain man-god, and clothing in his skin a living man, who thus became the new representative of the god-head."[1]

It is civilisation that determines the tone of religion. In Peru, where the civilisation was higher and the priesthood less powerful, the sacrificial system was less burdensome and less terrible. Thus human sacrifices were practically extinct. The Peruvians had the institution of a Holy Communion, in which they ate of a sacred bread, *sancu*, sprinkled with the blood of a sacrificed sheep, the priest pronouncing this formula: "Take heed how ye eat this *sancu;* for he who eats it in sin and with a double will and heart is seen by our Father, the Sun, who will punish him with grievous troubles." The Spaniards themselves recognised that the Mexicans ate the mystical body of the God with every sign of devotion and contrition; and they were so far from depreciating the Peruvian Communion that they supposed St. Bartholomew had established it.[2]

With these facts confronting us, it is nothing short of marvellous to find many learned divines completely ignoring them in their apologetic efforts. I say marvellous, for I assume they possess honesty of purpose and some acquaintance with ancient beliefs; but

[1] Quoted from his celebrated book, *The Golden Bough.*
[2] See p. 145, *note.*

perhaps I am wrong in the latter assumption. The continuance of the celebration of the Holy Eucharist until the present day is held to be one of the evidences for the Christian faith, and this on the ground that the rite could not have survived if Christ had not founded it. For some reason, best known to the apologist, the almost universal observance of the same ceremony, ages before the Christian era, and its survival among the nations who finally adopted Christianity, are entirely overlooked. Thus Dr. Maclear, in his book, *The Evidential Value of the Holy Eucharist*, says: "The singular rite has survived all the vicissitudes of more than 1,000 years.....The early Christian would inform a supposed questioner that the meal was a sacrificial feast, instituted by Him from Whom we are called Christians, and Who died for us on the Cross. Here, then, we are on solid ground. The rite, *so unique and so unprecedented*, rests on an objective historical fact." One would think that Dr. Maclear had entirely neglected the study of ancient and even modern non-Christian[1] beliefs.

### VEGETATION GODS.

There is another class of primitive sacrificial custom which claims our careful attention, in order that we may see whether it manifests the beginning of a revelation from God. Even if we could agree that all these gruesome details represent a savage's glimmerings of the truth, we must allow that the theory collapses when the object of the custom can be shown to have little or nothing to do with religion in any true sense of the word. Subtle intellects are capable

[1] See Appendix.

of maintaining that the worship of ancestors, or of the Sun, or of imaginary devils, betokens a dim perception of God; but when it comes to the propitiation of a vegetation-god solely for the sake of the material benefits expected to be derived from his cult, surely it is time to dismiss the theory as worthless. "All the world over, savages and semi-civilised people are in the habit of sacrificing human victims, whose bodies are buried in the field with the seed of corn, or other bread stuffs. Often enough the victim's blood is mixed with grain in order to fertilise it. The most famous instance is that of the Khonds of Orissa, who chose special victims, known as Meriahs, and offered them up to ensure good harvests. The Meriah was often kept years before being sacrificed. He was regarded as a consecrated being, and treated with extreme affection, mingled with deference."[1] "The periodical sacrifices," says Dr. Frazer, in *The Golden Bough*, "were generally so arranged by tribes and divisions of tribes that each head of a family was enabled, at least once a year, to procure a shred of flesh for his fields, generally about the time when his chief crop was laid down." Khonds in distress often sold their children as Meriahs, "considering the beatification of their souls certain, and their death, for the benefit of mankind, the most honourable possible." Their children were representatives of the Deity. With advancing civilisation we have the substitution of an animal in place of the human representative of the God. In some cases the worshippers tore the living animal to pieces with their teeth. The rending and devouring of live bulls,

[1] See "Gods of Cultivation" in Grant Allen's *Evolution of the Idea of God*.

calves, and goats seems to have been a regular feature of the Dionysiac rites, the participators in the orgy fancying that they were devouring the actual body and blood of the god. With the further advance of civilisation (or, according to the latest Christian theory, with the further advance of God's revelation), as in the Mediterranean region, the bodies of the gods of agriculture were eaten by their votaries in the shape of cakes of bread, or other food stuffs, and their blood was drunk in the ferm of wine.[1]

If Dr. Frazer be right as to the priority of the idea of a vegetation-god in cults commonly associated with the Sun, then Krishna, Osiris, Dionysus or Bacchus, Adonis, Attis, and other Saviours whose deaths and resurrections were annually celebrated at the spring equinox (our Easter), may have been primarily vegetation-victims, the abstract ideas which identified the death and resurrection of the god with the annual winter sleep and spring revival being finally fathered upon the worship. Whatever explanation may be the correct one for the phenomenon of a common mythos over the greater portion of the globe, it is certainly not that of a Progressive Revelation. Such an explanation has never been mooted by anyone but the Christian apologist. "Among early men and savages every act of life has a sacred significance, and agriculture especially is everywhere and always invested with a special sanctity. To us it would seem natural that the act of sowing seed should be regarded as purely practical and physiological; that the seed should be looked upon merely as the part of the plant intended for reproduction, and that its germination

[1] See Appendix.

should be accepted as a natural and normal process. Savages and early men, however, had no such conceptions. To them the whole thing is a piece of natural magic."[1] Are we, then, to regard this working of primitive thought as the working of the Holy Spirit? Surely we may dismiss such a preposterous theory? It will serve the Church no good purpose; for, while thinking men will be further than ever estranged, it will furnish the militant agnostic with a fresh weapon for his attacks upon her.

### WHY MEN EAT THEIR GOD.

Whatever may have been the ultimate origin of the idea of God, and of the belief in His expiatory death and subsequent resurrection, the origin of the custom of eating Him sacramentally permits of a very simple explanation. "Du Chaillu notes that some of his West African followers, when going on an expedition, brought out the skulls of their ancestors (which they religiously preserved) and scraped off small portions of the bone, which they mixed with the water and drank, giving as a reason for this conduct that their ancestors were brave, and that by drinking a portion of them they too became brave and fearless. Here we have a simple and early case of that habit of 'eating the god' to whose universality and importance Dr. Frazer has called attention."[2] It is a common early belief, which may still be met with, that by eating a certain animal the consumer will become possessed of its qualities. It is notorious, for instance, that the Miris of Northern

[1] *The Evolution of the Idea of God* (chapter on "The Gods of Cultivation").

[2] *Ibid* (chapter on "The Origin of Gods").

India prize tiger's flesh for men, because it gives them strength and courage. And apparently the same belief exists also in Southern India, for I remember our Madrassi ayah—a Christian by the bye—begging for the hind leg of a panther (shot by my wife), and explaining that she wanted to eat it in order to make her *muzbut* (strong). I may mention also that certain religious rites still in vogue among the Hindoos—disgusting as they are, not only to our ideas, but in fact—arise from a similar notion.

Herbert Spencer discusses this primitive idea in his *Principles of Sociology*. He explains how "attributes or properties, as we understand them, are not recognisable by the savage—are abstractions which neither his faculties can grasp nor his language express. Hence certain beliefs, everywhere conspicuous among the uncivilised. A special potency which some object or part of an object displays belongs to it in such a wise that it may be acquired by consuming or possessing this object or part. The powers of a conquered antagonist are supposed to be gained by devouring him. The Dakotah eats the heart of a slain foe to increase his own courage; the New Zealander swallows his dead enemy's eyes that he may see further; the Abipone consumes tiger's flesh thinking so to gain the tiger's strength and ferocity—cases which recall the legend about Zeus devouring Metis that he might become possessed of her wisdom. Clearly the implied mode of thought, shown even in the medical prescriptions of past ages, is a mode of thought necessarily persisting until analysis has disclosed the complexities of causal relations."[1] "The belief that the qualities

[1] *Principles of Sociology*, vol. i. (chapter on "Primitive Ideas," p. 102).

of any individual are appropriated by eating him is illustrated by the statement of Stanbridge, that when Australians kill an infant they feed an older child with it, believing 'that by its eating as much as possible of the roasted infant it will possess the strength of both.' Elsewhere dead relations are consumed in pursuance of an allied belief. We read of the Cucamas that, 'as soon as a relation died, these people assembled and ate him roasted or boiled, according as he was thin or fat!'"[1]

It is easy, then, to understand why a savage should desire to partake of the flesh of an animal or man whom he regards as divine. By eating the body of the god he shares in the god's attributes and powers. "And when," as Dr. Frazer points out,[2] "the god is a corn-god, the corn is his proper body; when he is a vine-god, the juice of the grape is his blood; and so by eating the bread and drinking the wine the worshipper partakes of the real body and blood of the god." If the apologist, nothing daunted, maintains that there is a religious germ in these primitive superstitions, it is practically tantamount to saying that every superstition contains such a germ; that superstition and religion are, in fact, often synonymous terms. I thought it was only the sceptic who said that. Before committing himself any further to a supernatural theory which is so obviously untenable, I do entreat the average apologist to read carefully the works of great thinkers who have made primitive man their especial study. Let him read, for instance, Herbert Spencer's *Principles of Sociology*, where he will find a

[1] *Principles of Sociology* (chapter on "Inspiration, Divination, Exorcism, and Sorcery," p. 241).

[2] P. 366, vol. ii. of *The Golden Bough*.

natural and mind-satisfying explanation of primitive ideas concerning supernatural agents, ghosts, spirits, demons, gods, resurrection, another life, inspiration, divination, sacrifices, fasting, propitiation, and prayer. He will learn, also, much that he ought to know concerning ancestor-worship, idol-worship, fetish-worship, animal-worship, plant-worship, nature-worship, and the heathen deities generally. He should also read Frazer's *Golden Bough*, J. M. Robertson's *Pagan Christs* and *Christianity and Mythology*, and other scholarly and informing works of this description, instead of confining his studies to works of an apologetic character, where everything incompatible with existing Christian theories is carefully omitted, or coloured out of all recognition.

## § 4. *The Solar Myth.*

### JONAH AND THE WHALE.

The resemblances to ancient myths are not confined to the principal incidents in the life of Christ. Many of the most noteworthy events related in the Old Testament have their counterpart in widespread legends. That the stories of the Creation, Fall, and Deluge are legends is well known—a visit to the British Museum should convince the most captious critic on this point—but it is not so well known that ancient folk-lore contains stories similar to those of the Tower of Babel, the trial of Abraham's faith, Jacob's vision of the ladder between earth and heaven, the finding of Moses in an ark, the transformation of Moses' rod into a serpent, the Israelites' passage through the Red Sea on dry land, Moses smiting the

rock and thus producing water, the reception by Moses of the Ten Commandments from God, Balaam's expostulating ass, Joshua's command to the sun and the sun's obedience, Samson and his exploits, Elijah's ascent to heaven, and Jonah's sojourn for three days and three nights in the belly of a fish.

This Jonah episode has an important bearing on the subject under discussion, as it is a typical case of an absorption of the universal mythos. Among other authorities, Godfrey Higgins tells us: "The story of Jonas swallowed up by a whale is nothing but part of the fiction of Hercules, described in the Heracleid or Labours of Hercules, of whom the same story was told, and who was swallowed up at the very same place, Joppa, and for the same period of time, three days."[1] Again, with the exception of those who refuse to acknowledge anything damaging to the literal truth of Holy Writ, all professors of theology are agreed that the miracle recorded in the book of Jonah is not a historical fact. This in spite of the alleged personal interviews with God as there recounted; while the plea that we must make allowance for oriental imagery serves only to throw discredit upon historians on whom we are relying for *facts* upon which the scheme of Christianity depends. Now, the story of the three days' sojourn of Hercules and other heroes in the bowels of the earth, or the belly of a fish, is only a different version of the myth concerning the death and resurrection of a god which we find to be prevalent over nearly the whole world. And, according to the new Christian theory, this shows an intuition of Christ's death and resurrection!

[1] *Anacalypsis*, vol. i., p. 638.

ANTICIPATIONS OF CHRISTIANITY IN SOLAR MYTHS.

The advanced theologians, who are presenting us with this theory, have to explain, among other things, how it was that Christ himself took the "Jonah and whale" story seriously, treating it as sober history. He spoke of no mere allegory when He said: "For as Jonas was three days and three nights in the whale's belly; so shall the Son of Man be three days and three nights in the heart of the earth."[1] Neither Christ himself nor the Apostles spoke of any revelation embodied in *heathen* beliefs. Very much the reverse. Yet the Bishop of Birmingham (late of Worcester), speaking to the adversaries of Christianity, informs them: "You say that we find in Christianity the relics of paganism. On the contrary, we find in paganism, intermingled with much that is false, superstitious, and horrible, the *anticipations of Christianity.*" Is that why we have paid them the compliment of adopting their dates for the birth and death of their Saviours?[2] Canon P. H. Robinson goes so far as to say that Christianity has benefited by the addition of heathen thought [N.B. He owns there has been this addition], and that it is yet to benefit by further contact with heathen thought! His actual words are: "*If Greek and Roman thought were needed for a full appreciation of the meaning of the Incarnation, why may we not say the same of Indian and Chinese thought? Surely we are justified in believing that every country and every people have something to contribute to Christianity, and that the completion of the Christian revelation awaits the contribution of each. We believe*

[1] St. Matthew xii. 40. [2] See Appendix.

*that there are many important aspects of the Christian truth which have never been understood, simply because Christianity has not yet been reflected in the experience of those nations of the world which are still heathen.*"[1]

### THE CHRISTIAN THEORY IGNORED BY SCIENCE.

The earliest attempts at a crude science of mythology were efforts to reconcile the legends of the gods and heroes with the religious sentiment which recognised in these beings objects of worship and respect. When the Christians first approached the problem of heathen mythology, they agreed with St. Augustine that the gods were real persons—but diabolical, not divine. "Some later philosophers, especially of the seventeenth century, misled by the resemblance between Biblical narratives and ancient myths, came to the conclusion that the Bible contains a pure, the myths a distorted, form of an original revelation."[2] Now, however, in tracing myths and legends to their probable origins, the modern mythologist never dreams of calling to his aid any supernatural theory.

Myths present, I take it, two main problems—first as to their origin, and second as to their resemblances to Biblical narratives. Some mythologists, while no longer allowing orthodox tradition to hamper them, only profess to answer the first question. They disclaim the obligation of entering the arena of theological controversy. It is important that the Church should thoroughly realise this, and that any disagreement there may be among mythologists as to the solution of the first problem—the origin of myths—

[1] *Studies in the Character of Christ*, vi. 102.
[2] *Encyc. Brit.*, art. "Mythology."

has little or no bearing upon the solution of the second problem—the Bible parallels. What does it matter whether the gods had a vegetable or a solar origin, or arose, as Max Müller thought, from "a disease of language"? The all-important question for Christians is: Can any of these possible origins point to a Progressive Revelation, and, if not, how are we to account for the Bible parallels?

### THE SUN AS A SYMBOL.

Suppose that, whatever the ultimate origin may have been, certain myths containing the parallels are, as we know them, solar myths (and on this point mythologists are now in complete accord); how can a belief be, at one and the same time, a solar myth and also an allegory expressing a spiritual truth? The sun is the object of worship, and its apparent movements give rise to myths concerning the birth, death, and resurrection of a Saviour.[1] Can we call this Progressive Revelation? "Certainly," the apologists may reply; "is there no bright Sun of Righteousness—no personal and loving Son of God, of whom the material sun has been the type or symbol, in all ages and among all nations? What power is it that comes from the sun to give light and heat to all created things? If the symbolical sun leads such a great and heavenly flock, what must be said of the true and only begotten Son of God? If Apollo was adopted by early Christian art as a type of the Good Shepherd of the New Testament, this interpretation of the sun-god among all nations must be the solution of the universal mythos. What other

[1] See Appendix.

solution can it have? To what other historical personage but Christ can it apply? If this mythos has no spiritual meaning, all religion becomes mere idolatry, or the worship of material things."[1]

Will this sort of reasoning satisfy the average man? To begin with, the sun-worshippers themselves had no idea that the sun was, as is now alleged, the symbol of a great Truth. The sun, or their conception of the sun as a divine person in a blazing car, was the object of their worship. What a waste of worship for thousands upon thousands of years! —worship that might have been centred upon the true God. Even now, nigh on 2,000 years after God was pleased at last to reveal Himself, as we are told, to all mankind, the greater portion do not know Him, or they deny Him. If God intended the sun to be a symbol of Christ, why have we never been told this before? Why even now is it only put forward by a certain school of apologists in costly books that few will ever set their eyes upon? It is noteworthy, too, that the horrors that accompanied the worship of this same "bright Sun" are discreetly kept in the background by these advocates of the "symbol" theory.

### § 5. *Concluding Remarks on Christian and Anti-Christian Theories.*

If Progressive Revelation be true, it is the most marvellous proof of the truth of Christianity—far the greatest proof that has ever yet been presented to us. Far greater, for instance, than the prophecies of those so-called prophets of the Old Testament, who, it now transpires, were only anticipating or describing events of their own times. It is such a proof as Christianity is

[1] See p. 117 of *Monumental Christianity*.

in dire need of just now—a proof that will save her from a peril which every hour brings nearer. Why, then, do we hear so little of this great discovery from the pulpit?[1] How comes it that it is discovered so many years after the fulfilment of these unconscious prophecies of the pagans? Why is it produced merely to confute the sceptic and restore confidence to that infinitesimally small number who happen to have studied, and therefore to have had their suspicions aroused by, Comparative Mythology? We are to believe that God revealed Himself by an exceedingly slow and painful process, extending over thousands upon thousands of years, and entailing the most horrible customs among savages. This process, mark you, not only led to the establishment of Christianity as the world became more civilised, but to the establishment of those other great religions which to this day are hostile to the reception of Christianity! Simple-minded people will never be induced to agree that revelation can be progressive in the manner now indicated to us by the apologist. Rather they will agree with the Rationalist, who denies the originality of Christianity, contending that it is a cult which adopted, step by step, the mysteries, the miracles, and the myths of the popular Gentile religions. Some freethinkers, indeed, go so far as to say that the whole Gospel story is nothing more than a myth; but the greater number consider that there is a substratum of truth, and that round this have slowly gathered the religious ideas and doctrines that were current in the old pagan world. The precise manner in which, they conjecture, the transformation actually

[1] See Appendix.

took place is a large subject, and there are differences of opinion—*e.g.*, some are inclined to think that Essenism, others that Mithraism, played a leading part; but the point to be borne in mind is that there is no difficulty whatever in understanding how the absorption of myths could have taken place, or how the Christian cult could have arisen and prospered.

I especially mention this, as some apologists argue that there was not sufficient time for heathen accretions between the death of Jesus and the writing of the Gospels. I can only reiterate the remark of the well-known professor of Church history, Dr. Harnack: "We know that the Gospels come from a time in which the marvellous may be said to have been something of almost daily occurrence. *We now know that eminent persons have not to wait until they have been long dead, or even for several years, to have miracles reported of them; they are reported at once, often the very next day.*" Also, I should call attention to the notes on Essenism and Mithraism at the close of this chapter, as they contain the answer to this final objection. But, personally, I fail to see how the "time" objection can in any case be maintained when we remember that the whole world had already been conversant for ages past with stories of suffering Saviours, similar in all essentials to the Gospel narratives. Besides, we know that documents have been tampered with more or less (the sceptic says "more," the apologist "less"), and that the composition of the Gospels took place many years after the events they purport to describe; while the age was one when men were extremely credulous, and when, consciously and unconsciously, imposing upon this credulity was the ordinary method of propagating a Faith.

## ARGUMENT FROM ESSENISM.

Regarding the difficulty of supposing that Jesus or the Evangelists could have been imbued with any sun-myth ideas, we must take into consideration the existence at that time of the Jewish sect, the Essenes. It seems quite possible that they considered Jesus of Nazareth to be the Messiah they were expecting, and that they came over to Christianity in a body. This monastic brotherhood, living in settlements in the desert west of the Dead Sea—*i.e.*, within a day's journey of Bethlehem and Jerusalem—not only placed love of God, of goodness, and of man as articles in their programme, but also sought with wonderful energy, according to their lights, to realise them in their life. Bunsen assures us (p. 158 of his *Angel-Messiah*), and furnishes strong grounds for his opinion, that the Essenes introduced the new doctrine of an Angel-Messiah, and with it the doctrine of the atoning death of the Messiah, into Judaism and Christianity. Canon Cheyne likewise places them among the number of those who prepared the way for the new world-religion. This seems to have been the very reason of their disappearance in the second century A.D.—Christianity dissolved them. So much so that the Essenes (often called Therapeutæ or healers) are identified by Eusebius with the Christian monks, and this opinion was generally adopted by the Fathers (see chap. xvii., bk. ii., p. 117, of *The Church History of Eusebius*, translated by the Rev. A. C. McGiffert, under the editorial supervision of Henry Wace, D.D., and Philip Schaff, D.D.).

From a perusal of the article on the "Essenes" in the *Encyclopædia Biblica*, it will be seen that Essenism is not a purely Jewish product, but that "Persian and Babylonian influence may reasonably be admitted." "Oriental influences were," Canon Cheyne informs us, "so to speak, in the air, and it is probable that the belief in the resurrection was not the only great debt which Jewish religionists owed to Zoroastrians." Bishop Lightfoot describes the Essenes as sun-worshippers. Is there, then, no likelihood of Jesus and His disciples being familiar with the ideas of sun-worshippers?

But, it may be urged, the teaching of Jesus Christ was opposed to Essenic doctrines in the matter of asceticism. True; but, in one way, this makes the case for the absorption of Essenic ideas all the stronger, for it would account for the strange fact that the Christians approved of asceticism in spite of their own Master's example to the contrary. I do not wish to press this anti-Christian theory further than to say that it appears to me that, among others, it is one deserving of consideration. Presuming that in Jesus the Apostles were confronted with a personality of overwhelming attractiveness and power of appeal to themselves, their language can be interpreted throughout as their attempt to expound and pass on their experience to the world. In this attempt they were naturally driven to employ such conceptions as were current in their day, and notably those of Messianic anticipations and Greek philosophy. Assuming that the Gospels are without any important interpolations, and that the authors are the Evangelists, even then the partial insertion of solar-myths would not necessarily be tantamount to any conscious dishonesty on the part of the Evangelists; it only points to their impregnation with the Jewish beliefs, such as those of the Essenes, that were around them. If this theory be correct, the difficulty arising from the shortness of the time between the Resurrection and the writing of the Gospels vanishes, since accretions of a later date would no longer be the sole cause for the events recorded by the Evangelists becoming inextricably entwined with mythical beliefs.

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## ARGUMENT FROM MITHRAISM.

This argument is fully developed in Part III. of Mr. J. M. Robertson's book, *Pagan Christs*, from which the following are quotations: "Mithraism was in point of range the most nearly universal religion of the Western world in the early centuries of the Christian era. As to this students are agreed. [Here Mr. Robertson gives in a footnote a formidable array of authorities.] To the early Fathers, we shall see, Mithraism was a most serious thorn

in the flesh; and the monumental remains of the Roman period, in almost all parts of the empire, show its extraordinary extension." Mr. Robertson points out that there are a number of monuments in honour of Mithra in England, France, Italy, Germany, and in many Mediterranean ports. He then proceeds to give us some exceedingly important information regarding Mithraism, out of which I select the following extracts for the more particular attention of Christians:—

"We have the cultus of Mithra as the Sun-god, the deity of light and truth, created by, and yet co-equal with, the Supreme Deity, and fighting on the side of the good against the evil power, Angra-Mainyu (Ahriman)—this at a period long before the Christian era. .....Mithra comes to occupy a singular position as between the two great powers of good and evil, Ormuzd and Ahriman, being actually named the Mediator, and figuring to the devout eye as a humane and beneficent God, nearer to man than the Great Spirit of Good, a Saviour, a Redeemer, eternally young, son of the Most High, and preserver of mankind from the Evil One..... The first day of the week, Sunday, was apparently from time immemorial consecrated to Mithra by the Mithraists; and as the Sun-god was pre-eminently 'the Lord,' Sunday was the 'Lord's Day' long before the Christian era..... We have some exact information as to the two chief Mithraic ceremonies or festivals, those of Christmas and Easter, the winter solstice and the vernal equinox, the birthday of the Sun-god, and the period of his sacrifice and his triumph.....There were in antiquity, we know from Porphyry, several elaborate treatises setting forth the religion of Mithra; and every one of these has been destroyed by the care of the Church.....Of course, we are told that the Mithraic rites and mysteries are borrowed and imitated from Christianity. The refutation of this notion, as has been pointed out by M. Havet, lies in the language of those Christian fathers who spoke of Mithraism. Three of them, as we have seen, speak of the Mithraic resemblances to Christian rites as being the work of devils. Now, if the Mithraists *had* simply imitated the historic Christians, the obvious course for the latter would be simply to say so.....The Mithraic mysteries, then, of

the burial and resurrection of the Lord, the Mediator, the Saviour; burial in a rock tomb and resurrection from the tomb; the sacrament of bread and water, the marking on the forehead with a mystic mark—all these were in practice before the publication of the Christian Gospel. .....Nor was this all. Firmicus informs us that the devil, in order to leave nothing undone for the destruction of souls, had beforehand resorted to deceptive imitations of the *Cross* of Christ.....Still further does the parallel hold. It is well known that, whereas in the Gospels Jesus is said to have been born in an inn-stable, early Christian writers, as Justin Martyr and Origen, explicitly say he was born in a cave. Now, in the Mithra myth, Mithra is both rock-born and born in a cave; and the monuments show the new-born babe adored by shepherds who offer first-fruits. .....Now, however, arises the great question. How came such a cultus to die out of the Roman and Byzantine Empire after making its way so far, and holding its ground so long? The answer to that question has never, I think, been fully given, and is for the most part utterly evaded, though part of it has been suggested often enough. The truth is Mithraism was not overthrown; it was merely transformed.....Though Mithraism had many attractions, Christianity had more, having sedulously copied every one of its rivals and developed special features of its own.....In the Christian legend the God was humanised in the most literal way; and for the multitude the concrete deity must needs replace the abstract. The Gospels gave a literal story: The Divine Man was a carpenter, and ate and drank with the poorest of the poor.....Gradually the very idea of allegory died out of the Christian intelligence; and priests as well as people came to take everything literally and concretely.....This was the religion for the Dark Ages..... Byzantines and barbarians alike were held by literalism, not by the unintelligible: for both alike the symbol had to become a fetish; and for the Dark Ages the symbol of the cross was much more plausibly appealing than that of the god slaying the zodiacal bull.....A Mithraist could turn to the Christian worship and find his main rites unimpaired, lightened only of the burden of initiative austerities, stripped of the old obscure mysticism, and with all things turned to the literal and the concrete, in

sympathy with the waning of knowledge and philosophy throughout the world."

But I must now close these quotations, apologising to Mr. Robertson for making such a free use of his book, and advising my readers to study it. They will find that his facts are reliable; they are all backed by the highest authorities, however much the conclusions drawn from them may, at present, be a matter of opinion. Suffice it to say here that the coincidences between Mithraism and Christianity are indescribably marvellous, and require further explanation, if Mr. Robertson's theory of the absorption of the former by the latter be not very largely true. Whatever the substratum of real history may be, there is no doubt that there was every opportunity for an early absorption of Mithraism, and every probability that it took place to an extent which throws a new flood of light upon many Christian doctrines. "The first six centuries were characterised by fierce controversies as to the most fundamental verities of the Christian faith, by the wholesale introduction of adult converts, who brought with them heathen and Jewish habits of thought, and who were in many cases of a low type of civilisation; and the adulteration of the Gospel was further facilitated by the purely nominal adhesion of persons anxious to stand well with the first Christian Emperors. The period was one of incessant fermentation and of rapid and continuous change." These are not the words of Mr. Robertson, nor of any other freethinker, but are an extract from the resolution adopted by the Church Association in connection with the appeal by Dean Wace and others to the authority of the First Six Centuries. What a period to appeal to! When we know what we do of the credulity and the methods of those "Fathers" of the Church, how can any rational being place in them any confidence whatsoever?

What steps do the Churches propose to take concerning these disclosures? Will they proclaim from the pulpit their new theory of a Progressive Revelation, or will they by their silence evince their own want of faith in this precious theory, and allow the storm of unbelief slowly to gather force until it bursts and overwhelms the Christian belief? Knowledge of the facts, so ably discussed by Mr.

Robertson, will soon be widely disseminated. Let there be no mistake on this point. Here, for instance, are some instructive passages appearing on page 496 of the *Nineteenth Century*, September, 1905:—

"It has been truly observed that the recovery, only partial as it is, of the history of this religion [the Mithraic] is one of the most remarkable triumphs of historical and antiquarian research. Originating in Persia, it was spread through the Roman Empire by poor and humble converts, who were at first mainly soldiers; but gradually, like Christianity, it permeated all ranks, and its temples are found scattered over the whole civilised world, from Babylon to the hills of Scotland. Just as the religion of Isis did, resembled that of Christ in being a religion of inward holiness, of austere self-discipline and purity; but the details of its resemblance are incomparably more close and curious. The briefest sketch of the matter is all that can be attempted here. According to Mithraic theology God considered in His totality is a Being so infinite and so transcendent that His direct connection with man and the universe is inconceivable. In order to become the father of man and creator, He manifested Himself in a second personality—namely, Mithra, who was in his cosmic character identified with the 'unconquered sun,' and, as a moral and intellectual Being, was the Divine Word or Reason, and, in more senses than one, 'the mediator' between man and the Most High. Life on earth, according to the Mithraic doctrine, is for man a time of trial. The Spirit of Evil, his adversary, is always seeking to destroy him—to crush him with pain and sorrow, or to stain his soul with concupiscence; but in all his struggles Mithra is at hand to aid him, and will at the last day be at once his judge and advocate, when the graves give up their dead, when the just are separated from the unjust, when the saved are welcomed like children into eternal bliss, and the lost are consumed in the fire prepared for the Devil and his angels. This Divine Saviour came into the world as an infant. His first worshippers were shepherds; and the day of His nativity was December 25th. His followers preached a severe and rigid morality, chief among their virtues being temperance, chastity, renunciation, and self-control. They kept the seventh day holy, and the middle

day of each month was a special feast of Mithra, which symbolised his function of Mediator. They had seven sacraments, of which the most important were baptism, confirmation, and a Eucharistic supper, at which the communicants partook of the divine nature of Mithra under the species of bread and wine."

# EVOLUTION

## Chapter V.

## IRRECONCILABLE DIFFICULTIES CONNECTED WITH EVOLUTION

### § 1. *Preliminary Remarks.*

#### THE DOCTRINE OF EVOLUTION.

General views of the development or evolution of the visible order of nature have been entertained by philosophers from the earliest historical times. There were pioneers of Evolution from Thales to Lucretius (600 B.C.–50 A.D.). The inquiry was then arrested for nearly sixteen hundred years—that is, until the renascence of Science. As knowledge, in spite of ecclesiastical discouragement, again slowly advanced, the science of biology gained in strength, and the work of Linnæus, Buffon, Lamarck, Erasmus Darwin, and others, paved the way for that modern theory of Evolution which Darwin, Wallace, Spencer, Huxley, and Haeckel have demonstrated to us. This doctrine of Evolution is no longer a mere speculative theory, possibly or probably true, but an established fact accepted by the whole scientific world with hardly a single dissentient voice. We know that everything as it now exists is the product of Evolution—the solar system, the earth, all lower forms of life, and lastly man, together with his languages, arts, sciences, theology, social habits, instincts, and, according to

many high authorities, morals, conscience, and consciousness. Yes, "man, perfect as he may appear to us, is still not a being apart in nature, but by his whole organisation is continuous with the other zoological species." "Anthropology, properly so-called, is, in fact, merely a chapter of zoology." "The homological structure of man, his embryological development, and the rudiments which he still retains, all declare in the plainest possible manner that he is descended from some lower form." He "derives his moral sense from the social feelings which are instinctive or innate in the lower animals."[1]

It is in the special sense of explaining how living things came into being, and how they have acquired their present characters, that the teaching of Evolution appears to be most in conflict with that of the Churches and the Bible. It is, therefore, this aspect of Evolution with which we are here chiefly concerned, and we may remember that, since Charles Darwin published his *Origin of Species* (1859) and *Descent of Man* (1871), his *main* conclusions have been confirmed by every branch of anthropological research—by palæontology, zoology, comparative anatomy, physiology, pathology, teratology, psychology, and more especially by embryology, a science in which there has been a remarkable progress during the past thirty years. Professor Haeckel points out on page 24 of his important work, *The Evolution of Man* (translated by Joseph McCabe), that "even when human anatomy began to stir itself once more in the sixteenth century, and independent research into the structure of the developed body was resumed, anatomists did not dare

[1] Quoted from Darwin's *Descent of Man*.

to extend their inquiries to the unformed body, the embryo, and its development. There were many reasons for the prevailing horror of such studies. It is natural enough, when we remember that a Bull of Boniface VIII. excommunicated every man who ventured to dissect a human corpse. If the dissection of a developed body were a crime to be thus punished, how much more dreadful must it have seemed to deal with the embryonic body still enclosed in the womb, which the Creator Himself had decently veiled from the curiosity of the scientist." Palæontology is another very young science that has contributed greatly towards the evidence of our origin. Professor Huxley informs us, in his essay on "The Rise and Progress of Palæontology," that the first adequate investigation of the fossil remains of any large group of vertebrated animals dates from 1822, and that in the last fifty years the number of known fossil remains of invertebrated animals has been trebled or quadrupled. Fossils were at one time believed to have been sown by the devil, whose fell purpose was to throw discredit upon the Bible story of Creation. Perhaps this pious opinion may have had something to do with the slow progress of palæontology?

### DARWINISM.

To prevent the chance of any misunderstanding, some explanation may be necessary for the benefit of those who are not in touch with scientific thought, and who hear that "Darwinism" is out of date. They should understand that, although the doctrine of Evolution as applied to organic life used to be widely spoken of by the term "Darwinism," the latter is now only used by scientists in a special

sense, to designate the belief in the gradual origin of species by natural selection. There are some who deem this hypothesis to be untenable. But there is no dispute whatever concerning the doctrine of the derivation or descent, with modification, of all existing species, genera, orders, classes, etc., of animals and plants, from a few simple forms of life, if not from one. Modern evolutionary theories, however, are more particularly concerned with the question of the ways and means by which living organisms have assumed their actual characters or forms, and on these points there are many shades of individual opinion.

Ignorance of the gist of the Darwinian theory, "natural selection,"[1] has been fruitful in misunderstandings and objections regarding it, so that it is advisable to mention here that the author of the theory states explicitly that it does not account for the origin of variations in individuals, still less in species; but that, given the origination and existence of variations, it shows that some of these are preserved, while others are not—that favourable variations tend to be perpetuated, and unfavourable variations to become extinct; that those variations which best adapt an organisation to its environment are most favourable to its preservation, and, consequently, that the theory of natural selection is adequate to explain the observed fact of the survival of the fittest in the struggle for existence. "Natural selection.....implies that the individuals which are best fitted for the complex and changing conditions to which, in the course of ages,

[1] "The preservation of favourable variations and the rejection of injurious variations I call natural selection" (Darwin, *Origin of Species*, ed. 1860, iv.).

they are exposed, generally survive and procreate their kind."[1] Natural selection does not, it may be added, imply conscious selection. It would be equally true to call it natural murder, or natural weeding-out. But, whether Darwin and Weismann be right or wrong in attributing so much to natural selection, what I wish particularly to point out is that the hypothesis of Evolution is nowise invalidated because, out of the various causes at work, we are not quite sure as yet which is the most efficient. It is necessary to make this clear, for, hearing that "Darwinism" is under dispute, the uninitiated might come to the conclusion that the animal origin of man is discredited.

### THE AVERAGE PERSON'S IDEAS ON THE EVOLUTION OF MAN.

With but very few exceptions, every biological student admits our animal origin. The ideas of most people, however, on this subject are hazy in the extreme, and no wonder, when the study of Evolution has never been included in their school curriculum. Men (and in very rare cases women) pick up a few crumbs of knowledge concerning the scientific theory of their origin, and then, from want of leisure or from religious motives, or from various causes, they drop the subject. Often they are put off by the dry details of the evidence and the technical phrases before they have obtained a real grip of the subject. They do not even know some of the more simple and obvious proofs which alone would have sufficed to convince them. One finds that men's views concerning Evolution are coloured by the opinion

[1] Darwin, *Varieties of Animals and Plants*, xx., 178.

prevailing at the time when they themselves were once faintly interested in the subject; and thus there is, at present, an inertia of ignorance, due to the misconceptions and prejudices of older generations. The opinions of our elders, being formed on a riper experience, very properly enlist our respect; but, unfortunately, in this instance they are based upon false premises, and so lead us astray. People who remember when Darwin first propounded his theory, and the violent, not to say virulent, opposition with which it was received by the Church, only too often remain in blissful ignorance of all that has since transpired. It is quite enough for them that they are erect, tailless, speaking, reflecting bipeds. With attributes such as these, they fondly imagine that they are separated from the beast by a gulf that neither Evolution nor any other theory could possibly bridge. Whatever the reasons may be—and there are many—the vast majority of Christians not only remain woefully ignorant of Evolution, but have no desire to learn anything more about it. They know it is opposed to Bible teaching. They prefer, as it has been well said, to consider themselves fallen angels rather than elevated apes.

We are not, however, concerned here with likes and dislikes, but only with the truth as far as our reason allows us to discover it. Moreover, if it be objected that we can take no pride in an animal ancestry, surely we may say the same of our savage ancestry. "He who has seen a savage in his native land will not feel much shame if forced to acknowledge that the blood of some more humble creature flows in his veins. For my own part, I would as soon be descended from that heroic little monkey, who braved his dreaded

enemy in order to save the life of his keeper; or from that old baboon, who, descending from the mountains, carried away in triumph his young comrade from a crowd of astonished dogs, as from a savage who delights to torture his enemies, offers up bloody sacrifices, practises infanticide without remorse, treats his wives like slaves, knows no decency, and is haunted by the grossest superstitions."[1] "We must acknowledge, as it seems to me, that man, with all his noble qualities, with sympathy which feels for the most debased, with benevolence which extends not only to other men, but to the humblest living creature, with his god-like intellect, which has penetrated into the movement and constitution of the solar system—with all these exalted powers—man still bears in his bodily frame the indelible stamp of his lowly origin."[2]

### THE ATTITUDE OF THE CHURCH.

Now let us consider the opinions of our spiritual guides. At the Shrewsbury Church Conference, in 1896, Archbishop Temple said that, "in his opinion, the full acceptance of the doctrine of Evolution would prove a great help to Christian thought and Christian life." In his book, *The Relations between Religion and Science*, he states that "the doctrine of Evolution leaves the argument for an intelligent and beneficent Creator and Governor of the world stronger than it was before." A decade has passed, and still how few Christians know of this "help," of this "stronger argument"! In the course of his address at the Weymouth Church Conference in 1905, the Bishop of Gloucester admitted that "Darwin's teaching

[1] Concluding remarks in Darwin's *Descent of Man*. [2] *Ibid.*

on evolution and development" had "revolutionised our ideas of God's action in nature." If this be so, how comes it that such a vast number of the pious still adhere to the old ideas? Is it not the duty of the pastor to educate his flock? What "ideas of God's action in nature" are missionaries even now putting into the heads of their converts? If we inquired of the average religionist, should we find that his or her ideas had been revolutionised? Not only are worshippers in the House of God kept in ignorance, but theological students are distinctly warned against the full acceptance of the doctrine of Evolution. For instance, Dr. Orr, a professor of apologetics, delivered a course of lectures before the professors and students of the Princeton Theological Seminary in 1903, the object of which was to show the dangers that must accrue to the Faith if the theories of Darwin were accepted in their entirety. He stoutly denied that man and woman were an evolution by slow stages from creatures that had gone before, and asserted that the first man came into being, as did the first woman, by a special act of creation. Unfortunately for the validity of his assertion he labours under the delusion that science concedes that man, or anything like man, cannot be traced further back than the post-glacial period, and that the brain capacity and physical characteristics of primeval man stood on as high a level as the average man of to-day![1]

In a recently-published letter,[2] written by Charles

[1] See his book containing the aforesaid lectures, and called *God's Image in Man and its Defacement in the Light of Modern Denials.* (Hodder and Stoughton; 1905.)

[2] Lent by Mr. Reginald Blunt to the Chelsea Public Library.

Kingsley to a correspondent, we read: "My own belief in the general truth of my friend Darwin's views—which deepen day by day as I verify them—has only given me wider and deeper and nobler notions of God's works in the material universe." He then proceeds to illustrate his own thoughts by a charming little story of a certain old heathen Khan, who was delighted with the idea of a God so wise that *he made all things make themselves*. This old Khan and Charles Kingsley overlook an objection which to myself, and to many others, seems quite insuperable—namely, that a God so wise and merciful would have seen his way to prevent that frightful wastefulness and cruelty which is part and parcel of the evolutionary process. But more of this difficulty anon.

To give another example of a clerical evolutionist: the Rev. G. S. Streatfield, vicar of Christ Church, Hampstead, on May 22nd, 1901, read a paper at the Southport Conference on "Questions that Must be Faced," in which he conceded that "the fact of Evolution is now hardly questioned in the scientific world—one might almost say in the world of thought." He, too, is charmed with the new theory, for he says: "It is, I suppose, generally agreed that the evolutionist has worthier, more rational, more truly philosophical views of the Divine Will and Action than those who hold the traditional theory." Clerics of his stamp and school are now becoming more outspoken, and admit their convictions in public instead of in writings that are likely to be seen only by a select few. Only lately the Dean of Westminster, addressing a large gathering of Sunday-school teachers, told them that the idea that the human species was

separately created was given up, and the fact of man's descent from lower organisms accepted. While admiring his candour, one cannot help calling to mind that in 1860 Professor Huxley was utterly ridiculed by erudite scholars of the Church for making a precisely similar statement.

Between those who accept and those who entirely reject Evolution there are various shades of opinion. There are those who accept everything short of the evolution of certain mental faculties; although students of comparative psychology now admit that the intellectual faculties of animals differ from those in man in degree only, not in their essence. There are those like the Rev. John Urquhart, author of a brochure called *Roger's Reasons*, who seek to reconcile the Bible story of creation with the Evolution theory, although any such interpretation was put out of court long ago by Professor Huxley's reply to Mr. Gladstone.[1] There are those who, like Dr. Torrey,[2] persist in altogether denying our animal origin, although there is hardly a single scientist, hardly a single thoughtful man, who has studied the subject without bias, who believes anything else.

[1] See Professor Huxley's essays, "The Interpreters of Genesis and the Interpreters of Nature" and "Mr. Gladstone and Genesis," appearing in the *Nineteenth Century* for December, 1885, and February, 1886, respectively, and also in the collection of Huxley's essays entitled *Essays Upon Some Controverted Questions*.

[2] Dr. Torrey informed a huge audience in the Albert Hall recently that he had given up the theory of Evolution for *scientific* reasons. "People speak of the missing link; why, they are all missing!" cried Dr. Torrey. Now, this is nothing more nor less than an untruth, and Dr. Torrey must know that it is, *if* he has studied Evolution, as he assures us that he has. Here is an example of the way Christians are misinformed by their spiritual teachers on the subject of Evolution. But what can you expect of an evangelist who thinks that he is serving God's cause by slandering the dead, as he did in the case of Colonel Ingersoll and Thomas Paine?

The number of clergymen who openly admit the truth of Evolution is as yet comparatively small. The few who do express their opinion openly, profess to be delighted with the new light that has now been shed upon God's methods. The question arises, How is it, then, that we hear so little about Evolution from the pulpit, and that, consequently, the faithful are kept in ignorance of this fresh revelation? The answer is obvious: It is because the advanced divines have yet to educate their congregations up to their way of thinking, and the process has, for many reasons, to be conducted with extreme caution. They know full well that they have a difficult and dangerous task before them; that those who accept Evolution, but are unable to accept their opinions concerning its spiritual helpfulness, will lapse into agnosticism. They also know that their views are not popular with conservative believers.

The chief reason, perhaps, for pulpit reticence is that the enormous majority in the Church still remain hostile to this new doctrine. They consider it to be dangerous, and likely to unsettle people's minds. Possibly in their inmost souls, if they have studied Evolution at all, they agree with a certain distinguished essayist who says: "A God who could have been deliberately guilty of them (the Evolutionary processes) would be a God too absurd, too monstrous, too mad to be credible."[1] The cruelty of the law of prey and struggle for existence, and the wastefulness of Nature's arrangements for the reproduction of life (plant and animal alike), do, indeed, appear sufficient warrant for some such painful impression; while, as

[1] See Mr. W. H. Mallock's *Religion as a Credible Doctrine*, p. 177.

if this were not enough, there is for the Christian the additional difficulty of reconciling Evolution with the Bible story of the Creation and Fall of man. These various difficulties must now be carefully investigated.

## § 2. "*Nature Red in Tooth and Claw.*"

Darwin tells us that "there is no exception to the rule that every organic being naturally increases at such a high rate that, if not destroyed, the earth would soon be covered by the progeny of a single pair. Even slow-breeding man has doubled in twenty-five years, and at this rate in less than a thousand years there would literally not be standing room for his progeny."[1] [I commend this passage to the notice of President Roosevelt and others who are so anxious that we should obey God's command to Noah, and "be fruitful and multiply, and replenish the earth."] "If all the offspring of the elephant, the slowest breeder known, survived, there would be, in seven hundred and fifty years, nearly nineteen million elephants, descended from the first pair. If the eight or nine million eggs which the roe of a cod is said to contain, developed into adult codfishes, the sea would quickly become a solid mass of them. It is the same with the plants. The lower organisms multiply with an astonishing rapidity, some minute fungi increasing a billion-fold in a few hours. But we need not give further examples of this fecundity whereby Nature, 'so careless of the single life,' secures the race against extinction. The result is obvious—a ceaseless struggle for food and place. In that struggle the race is to the swift, and the battle to the strong;

[1] *Origin of Species*, p. 65.

the weaker, be it in brain or body, going to the wall; the vast majority never reaching maturity, or, if they do, attaining it only to be starved or slain. As among men competition is sharper between those of the same trade, so throughout the organic world the struggle is less severe between different species than between members of the same species, because these compete more fiercely for their common needs—plants for the same soil, carnivora for the same prey."[1]

The problem of evil has exercised the mind of man from all time, and has never yet been solved. In our own time the solution *by theology* seems farther off than ever, now that the existence of the Devil is denied, while the law of prey and struggle for existence is admitted to be the Creator's own handiwork—to be His Divine plan for the evolution of all living things. Surely we must admit the inherent cruelty of the process? Professor Huxley, in an article on the "Struggle for Existence," concludes that, "since thousands of times a minute, were our ears sharp enough, we should hear sighs and groans of pain like those heard by Dante at the gate of hell [not to mention what we should *not* hear—the anguish and terror borne in silence], the world cannot be governed by what we call benevolence."[2]

Winwood Reade, in his striking book, *The Martyrdom of Man*, says: "But it is when we open the Book of Nature, that book inscribed in blood and tears; it is when we study the laws regulating life, the laws productive of development, that we see plainly how illusive is this theory that God is Love. In all things

[1] From *The Story of Creation*, by Edward Clodd. Chapter on "The Origin of Species," p. 95 of the cheap edition.
[2] *The Nineteenth Century*, February, 1888, pp. 162, 163.

there is cruel, profligate, and abandoned waste. Of all the animals that are born a few only can survive; and it is owing to this law that development takes place. The law of murder is the law of growth. Life is one long tragedy; creation is one great crime. Is it the law of a kind Creator that no animal shall rise to excellence except by being fatal to the life of others? It is useless to say that pain has its benevolence, that massacre has its mercy. Why is it so ordained that bad should be the raw material of good? Pain is not less pain because it is useful; murder is not less murder because it is conducive to development. *There is blood upon the hand still, and all the perfumes of Arabia will not sweeten it.*"[1]

Robert Blatchford (Nunquam), in his book, *God and My Neighbour*, which has caused no little stir of late in certain quarters, speaks to the same effect: "On land and in sea the animal creation chase and maim and slay and devour each other. The beautiful swallow on the wing devours the equally beautiful gnat. The graceful flying fish, like a fair white bird, goes glancing above the blue magnificence of the tropical seas. His flight is one of terror; he is pursued by the ravenous dolphin. The ichneumon-fly lays eggs under the skin of the caterpillar. The eggs are hatched by the warmth of the caterpillar's blood. They produce a brood of larvæ which devour the caterpillar *alive*.....A germ flies from a stagnant pool, and the laughing child, its mother's darling, dies dreadfully of diphtheria. A tidal wave rolls landward, and twenty thousand human beings are drowned or crushed to death. A volcano bursts suddenly into

[1] Pp. 519–20.

eruption, and the beautiful city is a heap of ruins, and its inhabitants are charred or mangled corpses. And the Heavenly Father, who is Love and has power to save, makes no sign.....Only man helps man. Only man pities ; only man *tries* to save."

"But," it may be said, "you are giving only the one side—the freethinker's side—of the question. What are the Christian evolutionist's replies to these terrible attacks upon our Heavenly Father?" You shall hear them, and judge for yourself whether they are likely to convince the multitude.

In the second chapter of his book on *Darwinism*, Dr. Alfred Russel Wallace lays himself out to say all that can be said, and a great deal that cannot reasonably be said, in extenuation of God's plan. He owns that, "to many persons, Nature appears calm, orderly, and peaceful. They see the birds singing in the trees, the insects hovering over the flowers, and all living things in the possession of health and in the enjoyment of a sunny existence. But they do not see, and hardly ever think of, the means by which this beauty and harmony and enjoyment is brought about. They do not see the constant and daily search after food, the failure to obtain which means weakness or death; the constant effort to escape enemies; the ever-recurring struggle against the forces of Nature. This daily and hourly struggle, this incessant warfare, is, nevertheless, the very means by which much of the beauty and harmony and enjoyment in Nature is produced, and also affords one of the most important elements in bringing about the origin of the species." After showing that the struggle for existence has proved a stumbling-block in the way of those who would fain believe in the all-wise and benevolent Ruler of the

universe, he goes on to say that "all this is greatly exaggerated"; that "the supposed torments and miseries of animals have little real existence, but are the reflection of the imagined sensations of cultivated men and women under similar circumstances"; and that "the amount of actual suffering caused by the struggle for existence among animals is altogether insignificant." Space, and a consideration for a possibly impatient reader, prevent my wading through the paltry reasons he proceeds to bring forward in order to try to prove that pain is not pain, and that the less degree of pain suffered by an animal or a savage is an excuse for its infliction.

The Rev. Professor Flint's book on *Theism*[1] is much patronised by the Church as an apologetic book of the highest order. The Professor tries to show (p. 204) that, although the process of development involves privation, pain, and conflict, it is subservient to the noblest end, because the final result is, as he alleges, order and beauty. All the perfections of sentient creatures are, he owns, due to this painful process. "Through it the lion has gained its strength, the deer its speed, the dog its sagacity. The suffering which the conflict involves may indicate that God has made even animals for some higher end than happiness—that He cares for animals' perfection as well as for animals' enjoyment. The ends are eminently worthy of a Divine intelligence." The Professor does *not* explain why, to paraphrase one of Mr. Lowes Dickenson's sage remarks, the less perfectly evolved generations should be sacrificed in order that future

[1] *Theism*, by the Rev. Robert Flint, D.D., LL.D., F.R.S.E., Professor of Moral Philosophy, Divinity, etc., being the Baird Lectures for 1877.

generations may be heirs of an unearned increment. Myself, I fail to see that even the ends, whatever they may happen to be—and they appear distinctly nebulous—can ever justify the cruel means; and I feel sure that our dumb fellow-creatures, the principal parties concerned, would agree with me, had they the power of reflection and speech. How can they, how can we, profess to approve of a plan that brings only unhappiness in its train? Suppose it were necessary in order to give more happiness in an after-life, the creature might meekly wonder why he or she had first to suffer pain, but could imagine, as the pious imagine, that it must be for some good purpose. Does Dr. Flint mean to say that there is an after-life for all living things? The learned Professor tries to explain pain away by describing its preservative use. He says (p. 246): "Were animals insusceptible of pain, they would be in continual peril." That would certainly spoil the evolutionary Creator's plans; but it hardly excuses His methods. Professor Flint, however, argues that, though pain is not an end in itself, it is a means to an end, and "its end is a benevolent one." How, I ask does it profit the creature itself to become ever so graceful in appearance, ever so perfect in mind and body, if it is only to gratify its Maker, who has an end in view with which it is in no wise itself concerned, and to attain which infinite pain has to be endured? Which would you or I rather be—lovely and unhappy, or ugly and happy?

There is another of these attempts to relieve doubt which I should like to bring to notice. The little book entitled *In Relief of Doubt*, by the Rev. E. Welsh, highly recommended by the Bishop of London, and one of the books selected by the Christian Evidence

Society for their examination in March, 1907, is quoted from by Dr. Warschauer[1] when refuting Mr. Blatchford's remarks on the cruelty of Nature. Dr. Warschauer selects the passage where Mr. Welsh says (p. 103): "We probably overstate the actual anguish of the lower creatures, imagining that they are bundles of sensitive nerves and quick brains like our own, and that they therefore have our sensibility to pain. A trodden worm writhes, and we credit it with all the pain that the foot of a Brobdingnag would inflict on a delicate child under his heel." Now, I am quite sure we credit no such thing. If we did, we, and especially the Isaak Waltons among us, would be perfect monsters of cruelty. Mark, too, how Messrs. Welsh and Warschauer carefully select for their illustration a *worm*—one of the lowly organised invertebrates! I may mention that Dr. Warschauer's book was particularly recommended to me by a well-read cleric, who thought that it was an admirable and complete refutation of Mr. Blatchford's arguments. Dr. Warschauer will hardly advance his cause by transparently omitting all mention of the higher animals, or of that bundle of nerves called man.

Nor will the average man agree with Professor Wallace that "*it is difficult even to imagine a system by which a greater balance of happiness could have been secured.*" Was it, for example, impossible for God to have decreed that sentient life should feed only on non-sentient life? Could He not have brought about development without all this terrible struggle? One would think that Messrs. Warschauer and Wallace must not only have had a particularly good time

[1] On p. 39 of his own work, *Anti-Nunquam*.

themselves in this world, but must have purposely shut their eyes to the misery all round them. If they had to change places with a wounded Russian or Japanese writhing in agony on the battlefield, I wonder whether their optimism would stand the test? The bravest of us shudder at the idea of being buried alive, and yet this was just the very fate of many a poor fellow in that truly terrible war. Not that *man* did not do his utmost. "One by one the dead and injured were carefully and tenderly taken out," relates an eye-witness, "and many a tear was shed by strong men at the terrible sights we had to witness. The worst part of our work was to have to endure the agonising cries of the men who were suffering terrible torture; but everyone helped so willingly that we felt that we were not doing enough." Please note, on the one hand, the cruel torture, and, on the other, the sympathy of *man*.

I will not weary or distress you further, gentle reader, with harrowing details of the pain that is endured alike by man and beast. It is all so well known. I shall only ask you to listen to a little story from the leaves of a naturalist's note-book, and to put to yourself a few questions. "A sparrow-hawk suddenly dashed under the branches of a hedgerow oak, and seized a linnet. But the bird of prey had not calculated upon the missel-thrush whose nest was in the oak, and who made it his business to have no suspicious strangers loitering in the neighbourhood. With an angry 'jarr,' and a swoop that would have done credit to the hawk himself, the plucky missel-thrush was upon the marauder almost at the same instant that the linnet was seized; a feather—a hawk's feather—floated in the air, and the astonished bird of prey flung himself sideways, and spread his talons to

meet the next assault. This action released the linnet, who sped away into the next parish like a bullet, while the missel-thrush, perched in the oak tree again, noisily threatened to repeat the attack. So the sparrow-hawk departed in the opposite direction to the linnet, and in two minutes all birddom was twittering and squabbling as before on the site of what was so very nearly a sudden tragedy." Is not your sympathy, humane reader, all with the linnet and its gallant rescuer, although the hawk was but carrying out the behests of its Maker! Does it not give us a thrill of pleasure when the lion is baulked of his prey —when the pet lamb is rescued from the butcher? Are we, then, more merciful than God? Was it Jesus or was it the gentle Gautama that marked

> "How lizard fed on ant, and snake on him,
> And kite on both; and how the fish-hawk robbed
> The fish-tiger of that which it had seized;
> The shrike chasing the bulbul, which did hunt
> The jewelled butterflies; till everywhere
> Each slew a slayer, and in turn was slain,
> Life living upon death. So the fair show,
> Veiled one vast, savage, grim conspiracy
> Of mutual murder, from the worm to man,
> Who himself kills his fellow"?[1]

## § 3. *The Bible Account of Creation Irreconcilable with Science in Each and Every Respect.*

The hypothesis respecting the past history of Nature, which was formerly, and is still very largely, accepted by Christians, is the doctrine fully and clearly stated in the immortal poem of John Milton—the English Divina Commedia—*Paradise Lost.* There is the best of reasons for the popularity of this doctrine.

[1] *The Light of Asia*, Book the First.

It agrees literally with the plain words of the Bible. The hypothesis is briefly this: "That this visible universe of ours came into existence at no great distance of time from the present, and that the parts of which it is composed made their appearance, in a certain definite order, in the space of six natural days, in such a manner that on the first of these days light appeared; that on the second the firmament or sky separated the waters above from the waters beneath the firmament; that on the third day the waters drew away from the dry land, and upon it a varied vegetable life, similar to that which now exists, made its appearance; that the fourth day was signalised by the apparition of the sun, the stars, the moon, and the planets; that on the fifth day aquatic animals originated within the waters; that on the sixth day the earth gave rise to our four-footed terrestrial creatures, and to all variations of terrestrial animals except birds, which had appeared on the preceding day; and, finally, that man appeared upon the earth, and the emergence of the universe from chaos was finished."[1] This interpretation is that which has been instilled into most of us in our childhood; but, "if we are to listen to many expositors of no mean authority, we must believe that what seems so clearly defined in Genesis—as if very great pains had been taken that there should be no possibility of mistake—is not the meaning of the text at all. The account is divided into periods that we may make just as long or as short as convenience requires. We are also to understand that it is consistent with the original text to believe that the most complex plants and animals may have been evolved

[1] Quoted from Huxley's *Lectures on Evolution.*

by natural processes, lasting for millions of years, out of structureless rudiments. A person who is not a Hebrew scholar can only stand aside and admire the marvellous flexibility of a language which admits of such diverse interpretations."[1]

Furthermore, we are to understand that there is no disagreement between theology and science in the *sequence* of the six acts of creation. Here at least we are not asked to twist words round so that one may mean a million. We have a definite statement which science either supports or it does not. The reader who knows that the verdict of science is negative may ask: "What is the use of wasting my time over a Christian argument which has long since been exploded?" I crave his pardon and patience; but, however true it may be that Mr. Gladstone's position was shown to be untenable, it is equally true that an enormous number of persons still persist in maintaining that there is a remarkable coincidence of the Pentateuchal story with the result of modern investigation, and that science supports them in this conclusion. The Very Rev. Henry Wace, D.D., Dean of Canterbury, in his address before the Christian Association of University College, London, on May 7th, 1903, reminded his hearers that a President of the British Association (Sir William Dawson) had stated that "it would not be easy even now to construct a statement of the development of the world in popular terms so concise and so accurate" as the first chapter of Genesis. And Dr. Wace asks: "From whence could have come this marvellous approximation, to say the least, to the facts which science has been

[1] Quoted from Huxley's *Lectures on Evolution.*

slowly revealing but from the Divine wisdom which alone was cognizant of them, and could alone make them known to mankind?"

A short time ago a lady very kindly sent me a little pamphlet, entitled *Roger's Reasons: or, The Bible and Science*, written by the Rev. John Urquhart. In this there is a resurrection pie of the old, old arguments, dished up again in such a guise as to take in the unwary and ill-informed, who would have no suspicion that the food thus given them for their refection was not only stale, but had been condemned as unfit for mental consumption by the whole of the scientific faculty. The lady above mentioned considered the reasoning perfectly convincing, and so possibly would ninety-nine Christian ladies out of a hundred. Mr. Urquhart is now much in evidence as a Christian apologist, and his pamphlet is being distributed broadcast (81,000 have already been issued), so that it does seem worth while taking some notice of the attempts that are still being made to treat the Creation myth as a Divine revelation. That modern science does not support either the interpretation put upon the Bible story of the Creation by Mr. Urquhart or by Mr. Gladstone, or any interpretation which is compatible with the general sense of the narrative, can be ascertained by anyone who will read Professor Huxley's essays, "The Interpreters of Genesis" and "Mr. Gladstone and Genesis." A few quotations from these essays may enable the reader to form a slight idea of the decisive manner in which the assertion that modern science supports the Bible narrative is controverted by science herself.

Speaking of Mr. Gladstone's contention that the statements in the first two verses of Genesis are

supported by the nebular hypothesis, Professor Huxley remarks: "But science knows nothing of any stage in which the universe could be said, in other than a metaphorical and popular sense, to be formless or empty; or in any respect less the seat of law and order than it is now. One might as well talk of a fresh-laid hen's egg being 'without form and void' because the chick therein is potential and not actual, as apply such terms to the nebulous mass which contains a potential solar system."

In a note at the end of the second essay, "Mr. Gladstone and Genesis," there is an excellent exposition of the "Proper Sense of the 'Mosaic' Narrative of the Creation." Among other points, Huxley, of course, notices how the stars are, as it were, thrown in—"He made the stars also." These words have always struck me as making it peculiarly clear that the "Mosaic" narrative originated from man, and not from God. The unknown authors of the Hexateuchal compilation were almost as ignorant of the nature of the stars and of their unthinkable distance away from us as a camel-driver in Sind, who gravely informed a friend of mine that the stars were once quite close to the earth, until one fine day a certain woman (it is always the *woman* who causes the mischief) grabbed hold of one and used it for cleaning her child, whereupon the gods, much annoyed at such presumption on the part of mankind, moved them far enough off to be safe from further desecration.

That the order of Creation as given in the Bible cannot be maintained will be clearly seen if we take the particular case of the birds and creeping things. Science does not affirm that the birds were made before "everything that creepeth upon the earth."

Mr. Gladstone tries to get over the difficulty by excluding reptiles, lizards, etc., from the category of creeping things. This will appear in the course of the following quotations from Professor Huxley's essay on "Mr. Gladstone and Genesis":—

"Mr. Gladstone's views as to the proper method of dealing with grave and difficult scientific and religious problems had permitted him to base a solemn 'plea for a revelation of truth from God' upon an error as to a matter of fact, from which the intelligent perusal of a manual of palæontology would have saved him....He does, indeed, make a great parade of authorities, and I have the greatest respect for those authorities whom Mr. Gladstone mentions. If he will get them to sign a joint memorial to the effect that our present palæontological evidence proves that birds appeared before the 'land population' of terrestrial reptiles, I shall think it my duty to reconsider my position—but not till then..... I have every respect for the singer of the Song of the Three Children (whoever he may have been); I desire to cast no shadow of doubt upon, but, on the contrary, marvel at, the exactness of Mr. Gladstone's information as to the considerations which 'affected the method of the Mosaic writer'; nor do I venture to doubt that the inconvenient intrusion of these contemptible reptiles—'a family fallen from greatness,' a miserable, decayed aristocracy reduced to mere 'skulkers about the earth,' in consequence, apparently, of difficulties about the occupation of land arising out of the earth-hunger of their former serfs, the mammals —into an apologetic argument, which would otherwise run quite smoothly, is in every way to be deprecated. Still, the wretched creatures stand there, importunately demanding notice; and, however different may

be the practice in that contentious atmosphere with which Mr. Gladstone expresses and laments his familiarity, in the atmosphere of science it really is of no avail whatever to shut one's eyes to facts, or to try and bury them out of sight under a tumulus of rhetoric.....However reprehensible, and, indeed, contemptible, terrestrial reptiles may be, the only question which appears to me to be relevant to my argument is whether these creatures are or are not comprised under the denomination of 'everything that creepeth upon the ground.'.....Hence I commend the following extract from the eleventh chapter of Leviticus to Mr. Gladstone's serious attention :—

> And these are they which are unclean unto you among the creeping things that creep upon the earth : the weasel, and the mouse, and the great lizard after its kind, and the gecko, and the land-crocodile, and the sand-lizard, and the chameleon. These are they which are unclean to you among all that creep (v. 29–31).

The merest Sunday-school exegesis, therefore, suffices to prove that, when the Mosaic writer in Genesis i. 24 speaks of 'creeping things,' he means to include lizards among them. This being so, it is agreed on all hands that terrestrial lizards and other reptiles allied to lizards occur in the Permian strata. It is further agreed that the Triassic strata were deposited after these. Moreover, it is well known that, even if certain footprints are to be taken as unquestionable evidence of the existence of birds, they are not known to occur in rocks earlier than the Trias, while indubitable remains of birds are not to be met with till much later. Hence it follows that natural science does not 'affirm' the statement that birds were made on the fifth day, and 'everything that creepeth on the ground' on the sixth, on which Mr. Gladstone rests his order ;

for, as is shown by Leviticus, the 'Mosaic writer' includes lizards among his creeping things."[1]

The crust of the earth is a book having for its pages strata that have, fortunately, been upturned for our perusal, and the story it tells must be true. The series of fossiliferous deposits which contain the remains of the animals which have lived on the earth in past ages of its history afford the evidence required concerning the order of appearance of the different species. As Professor Huxley says elsewhere[2]: "When we consider these simple facts, we see how absolutely futile are the attempts that have been made to draw a parallel between the story told by so much of the crust of the earth as is known to us and the story which Milton tells." Still, the story which Milton tells is in accord with the story which the Bible tells to those who are not given to playing conjuring tricks with the plain meaning of words.

Finally, we must remember that "hundreds of thousands of animal species, as distinct as those which now compose our water, land, and air populations, have come into existence and died out again." "If the species of animals have all been separately created, then it follows that hundreds of thousands of acts of creative energy have occurred, at intervals throughout the whole time recorded by the fossiliferous rocks; and, during the greater part of that time, the 'creation' of the members of the water, land, and air populations must have gone on contemporaneously."[3]

[1] *Controverted Questions*, pp. 100, 102, 103, 104.
[2] In *Lectures on Evolution*.
[3] Quoted from "The Interpreters of Genesis," in the essays on *Controverted Questions*, p. 91.

The common-sense view of the Creation story, and one that is now widely accepted even by orthodox Christians, is that it is a myth. Many of us will, therefore, agree with Professor Huxley when he says: "I suppose it to be an hypothesis respecting the origin of the universe which some ancient thinker found himself able to reconcile with his knowledge, or what he thought was knowledge, of the nature of things, and therefore assumed to be true. As such, I hold it to be not merely an interesting, but a venerable, monument of a stage in the mental progress of mankind; and I find it difficult to suppose that any one who is acquainted with the cosmogonies of other nations—and especially with those of the Egyptians and the Babylonians, with whom the Israelites were in such frequent and intimate communication—should consider it to possess either more or less scientific importance than may be allotted to these."[1]

It may not be inappropriate to conclude this section with Milton's conception of the last act of creation, so charmingly simple and so strictly according to the Bible and what Christ Himself believed, and yet so completely untrue:—

> The sixth, and of creation last, arose
> With ev'ning harps and matin, when God said,
> Let the earth bring forth soul living in her kind:
> Cattle and creeping things, and beast of the earth,
> Each in their kind. The earth obey'd, and straight
> Op'ning her fertile womb teem'd at a birth
> Innumerous living creatures, perfect forms,
> Limb'd and full grown....
>
> There waited yet the master-work, the end
> Of all yet done; a creature who, not prone

[1] "Mr. Gladstone and Genesis," pp. 112-3 of *Controverted Questions*.

And brute as other creatures, but indu'd
With sanctity of reason, might erect
His stature, and upright with front serene
Govern the rest, self knowing:....

....Therefore the omnipotent
Eternal Father—for where is not he
Present?—thus to his Son audibly spake:
Let us make now man in our image, man
In our similitude, and let them rule
Over the fish and fowl of sea and air,
Beast of the field, and over all the earth,
And every creeping thing that creeps the ground.
Thus said, he form'd thee, Adam, thee, O man,
Dust of the ground, and in thy nostrils breath'd
The breath of life: in his own image he
Created thee, in the image of God
Express, and thou becam'st a living soul.
—*Paradise Lost*, Book VII., 449–456, 505–510, 516–528.

## § 4. *Proofs of Our Animal Origin.*

The third and last of the Evolution stumbling-blocks is that connected with the dogma of the Fall and Atonement. Before considering this, it will be better, I think, to summarise as briefly and simply as possible some of the chief proofs of our animal origin. The well-informed can skip this section, which is intended for the benefit of that vast majority —the ill-informed. Space will not permit me to do much more than allude to the proofs; but anyone really desirous of convincing himself or herself of the truth of the doctrine, and at the same time wishing to avoid details that might possibly prove wearisome, will find it popularly treated in Huxley's work on *Man's Place in Nature* (Macmillan); in Dennis Hird's *An Easy Outline of Evolution* (Watts & Co.; 2s. 6d.); in Edward Clodd's *The Story of Creation* (Watts & Co.; 6d.); in S. Laing's *Modern Science and Modern Thought*

(Watts & Co.; 6d.); in Haeckel's *Riddle of the Universe* (Watts & Co.; 6d.), though this can hardly, perhaps, be described as popular; and in Metchnikoff's *The Nature of Man* (Heinemann, 1903; 12s. 6d.). The most complete work on the subject is Haeckel's *The Evolution of Man* (Watts & Co., 1905; 42s.; abridged edition, 2s.). This is in two volumes, copiously illustrated, of which the first is entirely devoted to human embryology or ontogeny, a branch of science which furnishes the most overwhelming evidence.

The proofs may, roughly speaking, be grouped under three heads—the extraordinary affinity of bodily structure, the revelations of embryology, and the tale told by the useless rudimentary organs. We will commence with

### THE EXTRAORDINARY AFFINITY OF BODILY STRUCTURE.

"It is notorious that man is constructed on the same general type or model with other mammals. All the bones in his skeleton can be compared with corresponding bones in a monkey, bat, or seal. So it is with his muscles, nerves, blood-vessels, and viscera. The brain, the most important of all the organs, follows the same law, as shown by Huxley and other anatomists."[1] Man's nearest animal relations are the tailless anthropoid or man-like apes—namely, the gorilla, the chimpanzee, the orang, and the gibbon. "Now that all the details of the human organisation have been studied, and the anatomical structures of man and large monkeys without tails have been compared, bone with bone, and muscle with muscle, a

[1] *The Descent of Man*, p. 10.

truly astonishing analogy between these organisms is made manifest—an analogy apparent in every detail."[1] The following are some of the points more particularly calling for notice:—

*Dentition.*—In the natural history of mammals the teeth play an important part as a means of determining differences and relationships. "Everyone knows the *milk teeth* and the *permanent teeth* of man. The anthropoid apes bear in this respect an antonishing likeness to man. The number (thirty-two in the adult), the form and general arrangement of the crown, are identical in man and anthropoid apes. The differences are to be found only in minor details."[2] "But the fact must not be lost sight of that all these differences are less pronounced than those which exist between the dentition of anthropoid apes and that of all other monkeys."[3]

*The Foot.*—Anti-evolutionists have laid great stress on the difference between the foot of a man and that of an anthropoid ape. But it is clearly shown by Huxley that in all essential respects the hinder limb of the gorilla terminates in as true a foot as that of man,[4] and "that, be the differences between the hand and foot of man and those of the gorilla what they may, the differences between those of the gorilla and those of the lower apes are much greater."[5]

*The Sacrum.*—"In monkeys, as a whole, the sacrum is composed of three, or rarely four, vertebræ, while in anthropoid apes it contains five—that is to say, just as many as in man."[6]

*The Skull.*—Here the differences are more marked;

[1] *The Nature of Man*, by Metchnikoff, p. 41.
[2] *The Descent of Man*, p. 10. [3] *The Nature of Man*, p. 42.
[4] *Man's Place in Nature*, p. 126. [5] *Ibid*, p. 127.
[6] *The Nature of Man*, p. 42.

but again we must remind ourselves that, as regards the osteology, Professor Huxley tells us that "for the skull, no less than for the skeleton in general, the proposition holds good that the differences between man and the gorilla are of smaller value than those between the gorilla and some other apes."[1]

*The Brain.*—Several distinguished zoologists at one time insisted on the absence in all monkeys of certain parts of the brain peculiarly characteristic of man, but now it is unanimously accepted that the parts of the brain in question are "precisely those structures which are the most marked cerebral characters common to man with the apes. They are among the most distinctly simian peculiarities which the human organism exhibits."[2]

The difference between the brain of the orang and that of man is a mere difference of degree, and not of kind; and most students of comparative psychology now admit that the intellectual faculties of animals differ from those in man in degree only, not in their essence. Replying to his opponents, Professor Huxley compares the brain of man and that of ape with two watches, one of which will, and the other will not, keep accurate time. He exclaims: "A hair in the balance-wheel, a little rust on a pinion, a bend in a tooth of the escapement, a something so slight that only the practised eye of the watchmaker can discover it, may be the source of all the difference."[3]

The late Sir Charles Lyell mentions in his *Antiquity of Man* how Dr. Sumner, the late Archbishop of Canterbury, brought out in strong relief fifty years ago, in his *Records of Creation*, one

[1] *Man's Place in Nature*, p. 111. [2] *Ibid*, p. 139.
[3] *Ibid*, p. 102, *note*.

essential character separating man from the brute. As the same argument is still being "brought out," and is, on the face of it, exceedingly plausible, and as the answer to it has to do with the brain, it cannot be passed over. Dr. Sumner said: "It has been sometimes alleged, and may be founded on fact, that there is less difference between the highest brute animal and the lowest savage than between the savage and the most improved man. But, in order to warrant the pretended analogy, it ought to be also true that this lowest savage is no more capable of improvement than the chimpanzee or orang-outang." This objection is met by some such consideration as the following:—When you examine the enormous difference in the formation of the skull in man and ape (look, for instance, at plate xvii., vol. ii. of Haeckel's *Evolution of Man*), and when you remember that this sets hard at an early date, you surely have a good reason for limited improvability. Further, the brain of even the lowest savage represents a development of some half a million years above the ape along the line of intelligence. How, then, can we dream of making this up in one or a few generations by artificial training of the ape? Lastly, we have the enormous leverage of language, the inherited wealth of thousands of speaking generations, and an incalculable aid to thought. How much is the intelligence of the Microcephalæ, the clucking "small heads" lately on show at the Hippodrome, capable of rapid improvement? Our experiments do not show that the ape is not improvable, but only that we cannot, in a single generation, lift it over a gulf representing 500,000 years of human development. How can we expect it?

*The Blood.*—In the last few years an astonishing

confirmation of our relationship to the anthropoid ape has been discovered. We are *blood relations*. Elie Metchnikoff, Professor at the Pasteur Institute, shows this clearly in his book, *The Nature of Man*.[1] Until quite recently it was not known how to distinguish human blood from that of other mammals. A method giving conclusive results has now been discovered, and is used in forensic medicine. The same method has been employed in comparing the blood of man and the anthropoid apes, resulting in the discovery[2] that, in their case, there is practically no blood difference whatever!

### THE REVELATIONS OF EMBRYOLOGY.

The opponents of Evolution used to appeal to the special features of human embryology, which were supposed to distinguish man from all the other mammals; but in 1890 Emil Selenka proved that the same features are found in anthropoid apes, especially in the orang, while the lower apes are without them.

"When Huxley wrote, the embryological history of anthropoid apes was practically unknown. Darwin, Vogt, and Haeckel, in their attempts to support the theory of the animal origin of man, had not sufficient knowledge of the embryology of monkeys. It is only recently that important work on this subject has been published.....The placenta often gives information of great importance in the classification of mammals. It is sufficient to glance at the zonary placenta of dogs and seals to be convinced of the relationship of these

[1] Pp. 49–54. At the late International Congress on Tuberculosis, Professor Behring paid the highest tribute to Metchnikoff's labours on phagocytosis. Strange indeed are the instruments chosen by God for conferring His benefits on mankind; for the author of *The Nature of Man* denies His existence!

[2] Described in the *Lancet*, January 18th, 1902.

two species which at first sight seem so different. Now, the placentas of all the anthropoid apes examined up to the present are of the same discoid type as that of man. The arrangement of the umbilical cord of man, which was formerly considered as quite peculiar to him, is found in anthropoid apes, as has been established by Deniker and Selenka. It is striking that the anthropoids resemble man rather than the lower monkeys in the relation of the fœtus to the fœtal membranes. With regard to the embryos themselves, the similarity between those of monkeys and man is very great.....The youngest stages of human development that have been obtained can hardly be distinguished from those of the lower monkeys either in position or shape. More advanced stages exhibit greater differentiation, and the later embryos of man resemble those of anthropoids much more closely than those of the lower monkeys. The resemblance between the nearly mature fœtus of anthropoids and human embryos of about the sixth month is evident enough."[1]

We are thus bound, in all honesty, to own up to our ape-like progenitors. But this is only a small portion of the wonderful tale told by Embryology. "Man is developed from an ovule about 125th of an inch in diameter, which differs in no respect from the ovules of other animals,"[2] and, marvellous to relate, from that stage upwards the embryo is one continuous epitome of the history of man's evolution from lower forms of life.[3] Up to a certain point the germs, not

[1] *The Nature of Man*, pp. 45–48.

[2] *The Descent of Man*, vol. i., p. 14. According to the latest authorities, however, the human ovum (when mature) differs in many respects from other (especially non-mammal) ova.

[3] See the "Family Tree" of Life in the Appendix.

only of all mammals, but of all vertebrate animals, fishes, reptiles, and birds, are scarcely distinguishable. A sceptic may convince himself by studying the plates given in Haeckel's *The Evolution of Man*, and especially plates ix. to xiv., where the embryos of various animals are compared. At the more advanced stage, where the embryo has already passed the reptilian form, we find that for a considerable time the line of development remains the same as that of other mammalia. The resemblance, for example, after the first four weeks' growth, between the embryo of a man and that of a dog is such that it is scarcely possible to distinguish the one from the other. Even at the age of eight weeks the embryo man is an animal with a tail, hardly to be distinguished from an embryo puppy.[1] After this period the embryo emerges from the general mammalian type into the special order of primates to which man belongs. Thus does the growth of the egg from which man springs compress into a few weeks the results of millions of years, and set before us the history of his development from fish-like and reptilian forms (which, as we have seen, p. 211, Mr. Gladstone deemed so contemptible and "fallen from greatness"), and of his more immediate descent from a hairy, tailed quadruped, the extinct common ancestor of man and monkey. As evolution proceeds the embryo rises up to man, and the differences specialising the human infant at its birth, such as the largeness and more complex convolutions of the

[1] "It is," says Professor Huxley (in *Man's Place in Nature*, 1863, p. 67, and quoted by Darwin in his *Descent of Man*, p. 14), "quite in the later steps of development that the young human being presents marked differences from the young ape, while the latter departs as much from the dog in its developments as the man does. Startling as this last assertion may appear to be, it is demonstrably true."

brain, become more and more accentuated as its growth proceeds.

Regarding the question of "gaps," we have to bear in mind that it is part of the evolutionary theory that the active processes of evolution have very largely ceased, that existing forms are but a surviving remnant with enormous gaps, and that the survivors are so fitted at present to their surroundings that evolutionary forces are causative of equilibrium rather than change. We have already seen, too, that in the struggle for existence it is among the closely-allied species that the contest is more strenuous, and that the weakest, or least fitted to survive, has to go to the wall—to be wiped out. Thus it is that there is a tendency for species to become extinct, and for the gaps to be widened. The extraordinary thing is not that we have so little direct evidence of descent, but that we have so much. That there are not more links missing is due principally to the discovery of fossil remains. When an animal dies, the probabilities are, of course, enormously against geological preservation of its bones, yet the gaps are continually being filled up by geological finds, and, though the remaining gaps may be great, they are not unaccountable.

I must now pass on to the remaining set of proofs of our origin.

### THE TALE TOLD BY THE USELESS RUDIMENTARY ORGANS.

Perhaps nothing furnishes a more conclusive proof of our animal origin than the study of rudimentary structures—muscles, sense-organs, hair, bones, reproductive organs, etc. There are some which are "either absolutely useless, such as the mammæ of the male quadrupeds or the incisor teeth of ruminants

which never cut through the gums; or they are of such slight service to their present possessors that we cannot suppose that they were developed under the conditions which now exist."[1] Of useless rudimentary organs, or parts of organs, there are not less than one hundred and seven in man.[2] To this category belong the coccyx—the vestige of a tail—the muscles of the ear, the vermiform appendage, etc.

"The *os coccyx* in man, though functionless as a tail, plainly represents this part in other vertebrate animals. At an early embryonic period it is free, and, as we have seen, projects beyond the lower extremities."[3] It sometimes happens that we find external relics of a tail. Professor Haeckel, in Fig. 195, vol. i. of *The Evolution of Man* (library edition), shows the tail of a six months' old boy, which Granville Harrison removed by operation. The anthropoid ape, like man, has only the rudiment of a tail.

The *ear muscles* are rudimentary in man. "It is well known how readily domestic animals—horses, cows, dogs, hares, etc.—point their ears and move them in different directions. Most of the apes do the same, and our earlier ape ancestors were also able to do it. But our later simian ancestors, which we have in common with the anthropoid apes, abandoned the use of these muscles, and they gradually became rudimentary and useless. However, we possess them still. In fact, some men can still move their ears a little backward and forward by means of the drawing and withdrawing muscles; and with practice this faculty can be much improved. But no man can now

[1] *The Descent of Man*, vol. i., pp. 17–18.
[2] See *The Nature of Man*, p. 60.
[3] *The Descent of Man*, vol. i., p. 29.

lift up his ears by the raising muscle, or change the shape of them by the small inner muscles. These muscles were very useful to our ancestors, but are of no consequence to us. This applies to most of the anthropoid apes as well."[1]

The *vermiform appendage* of the cœcum is not only practically useless, but the source of that extremely dangerous complaint, appendicitis. It is remarkable that this organ is practically identical with the vermiform appendage of anthropoid apes, yet none of the other monkeys present any such resemblance with men. Professor Haeckel, speaking of the vermiform appendage, says: "The only significance of it in man is that not infrequently a cherry-stone or some other hard and indigestible matter penetrates into its narrow cavity, and by setting up inflammation and suppuration causes the death of otherwise sound men. Teleology has great difficulty in giving a rational explanation of, and attributing to a beneficent Providence, this dreaded appendicitis. In our plant-eating ancestors this rudimentary organ was much larger, and had a useful function."[2]

"In order to understand the existence of rudimentary organs, we have only to suppose that a former progenitor possessed the parts in question in a perfect state, and that under changed habits of life they became greatly reduced, either from simple disuse or through the natural selection of those individuals which were least encumbered with a superfluous part, aided by the other means previously indicated."[3]

Whatever the precise explanation may be, can

[1] *The Evolution of Man*, vol. ii., p. 708. [2] *Ibid*, 774.
[3] *The Descent of Man*, vol. ii., p. 32.

we bring ourselves to suppose that God created us with a number of useless organs, or that He placed them there as a snare to entrap our judgment? Again, "rudimentary organs, for the most part, display a congenital lack of the power of resistance, and, as Darwin suggested, for this reason they are frequently the seats of disease."[1] Can anyone imagine his Maker arranging all this on purpose? I can not. We are assured by pious apologists that God has instituted pain in order to save us from injuring ourselves; how can He, then, have specially provided us with organs whose only function is to be a source of danger?

Many other examples might be given bearing on this line of argument; but enough has been said, I hope, to convince the reader that in these rudimentary organs there is overpowering evidence against separate acts of creation, and in favour of an animal origin of the human race. Besides this, we have also the evidence derived from the study of our bodily structure and embryonic development. The bearing of these three great classes of fact is, as Charles Darwin remarks, unmistakeable. "It is only our natural prejudice, and that arrogance which made our own forefathers declare that they were descended from demi-gods, which lead us to demur to this conclusion."[2]

## § 5. *The Overthrow of the Doctrines of the Fall and Original Sin.*

### THE IMPORTANCE OF THE QUESTION.

No Biblical standpoint is more directly opposed to

[1] *The Nature of Man*, p. 67.
[2] *The Descent of Man*, vol. i., pp. 32–33.

modern evolutionary views than the doctrine of the Fall and Atonement. We have seen, in the chapters on the Higher Criticism and on Comparative Mythology, that the Bible story of Creation is nothing but a borrowed legend; and we have now seen that it could not in any case be true. If it were, Evolution would be untrue. Now, the account of the fall of man is an exceedingly important portion of the Bible, the whole fabric of the Christian faith being constructed upon it; and there is no doubt whatever that the average Christian realises this, and continues to believe in the "Fall." He may accept the doctrine of the evolution of the physical nature of man; but he flatly denies that his intellect and moral attributes were a part of the process, although such authorities as Darwin, Huxley, and Romanes clearly point out that man's intellect and moral sense have arisen from lower stages of the same faculties in his primate ancestors.

The conservative Christian believes that man was originally endowed with a lofty moral nature; that he succumbed to temptation; that he became a degraded being; that he has been working out his punishment ever since; and that his hope of escape from the curse laid upon all mankind lies in the atonement made by Jesus Christ. Even if inclined to have views less strictly in accord with the Christian teaching of the past eighteen hundred years, he still believes that all this is true in some sort of allegorical sense which cannot be exactly defined. Lastly, there is an ever-swelling host of perplexed Christians who, in their heart of hearts, feel much as Mr. Blatchford does when he says: "God is all-powerful. He could have made Adam strong enough to resist Eve. He could have made Eve strong enough to resist the serpent.

He need not have made the serpent at all. God is all-knowing. Therefore, when He made Adam and Eve and the serpent He knew that Adam and Eve *must* fall. And if God knew they *must* fall, how could Adam help falling, and how could he justly be blamed for doing what he *must* do? God made a bridge—built it Himself, of His own materials, to His own design, and knew what the bearing strain of the bridge was. If, then, God put upon the bridge a weight equal to double the bearing strain, how could God justly blame the bridge for falling?"[1]

The average divine, whatever his denomination, is usually in no hurry to accept Evolutionist theories of the Fall, or, if he does, he keeps it to himself. Dean Wace thinks the tale of Eden and the Fall is partly historical, partly allegorical, and, in any case, true to Christian experience; and Cardinal Newman considered that the whole orthodox Christian scheme stood or fell with a belief in some great "aboriginal catastrophe." Progressive divines teach, on the contrary, that the narrative of the Fall is not to be understood as literal history, any more than the visions of the Apocalypse are to be understood as a literal description of heaven. "For us," they say, "the underlying truth, and not the outward form in which that truth is clothed, is the essential thing." [As our first parents are represented as being in a state of guileless simplicity, and subsequently falling in with the tempting serpent, who, in obvious contrast with their untried innocence, is described as a being of special subtilty, the "underlying truth" appears to be that, with God's cognisance, man is

[1] *God and My Neighbour*, p. 134.

continually being taken advantage of by a crafty spirit of evil; or, to keep more closely to the religious evolutionist's idea, man's better nature, implanted by God, is being continually got the better of by animal instincts implanted by —— ?] These enlightened clerics are in a somewhat delicate position, and none probably recognise this more than they do themselves, as testified lately by the fact of over a hundred of their number distributing a manifesto to all the clergy of the Church of England, in which they express a desire to receive authoritative encouragement to face critical problems with entire candour.[1]

AN INSTRUCTIVE CRITICISM.

The gravity of the situation and the divergence of the new from the old teaching are summed up by the *Church Times* in the following pertinent remarks:—"It is impossible for Christians to affect nonchalance as to the result of the controversy between anthropologists like Lubbock, Lyell, Huxley, Haeckel, and Fiske, who assert the human race to have continuously (with whatever relapses) progressed out of brutish and squalid barbarism, and those who, like the late Duke of Argyll, Lang, Tylor, Hartmann,[2] Renouf, and most missionaries, maintain that savagery is a declension from higher things, and that 'man's natural state is civilisation'—not, of course, the civilisation of Paris and London, of trousers and half-penny papers, nor yet Rousseau's anarchic golden

[1] The document and the hostile criticisms concerning it in religious papers are highly instructive. Except for the correspondence on the subject in the *Standard* during May, 1905, under the title of "Faith and Religion," the general public are not likely to know of the matter.

[2] Tylor and Hartmann, however, believe in the animal descent of man, and therefore in a rise from primitive civilisation.

age, but creation in God's image after His likeness. It is said that we need believe no more about our first parents than that they were innocent—*i.e.*, had not yet made trial of *good* and evil; that the 'former Adam,' even after he had ceased to be a pithecoid hanging by his tail from boughs, and long after his mollusc[1] stage of existence, was still as *primus homo*, a demi-witted creature, burrowing in holes, gnawing roots, grunting, grimacing, snarling, shuddering; not even a noble savage, but bestial and grovelling. As moral consciousness slowly woke in him, he misused his powers; but such a 'fall' was really an advance. Such is the latest version of Paradise lost—of that great disinheritance, that moral and spiritual catastrophe, which, St. Paul avers, was the entrance of death into the world by one man, and which, he seems to say, dragged down the lower creation when the son of God, 'paragon of animals, noble in reason, infinite in faculty,' fell in Eden. We do not urge that the two teachings cannot be reconciled; but it is clear that the immense difficulty is not to be dismissed by saying that the Bible is a mosaic, not Mosaic, or that it does not profess to instruct us in anthropology."[2]

There is a downrightness and lucidity about this criticism of advanced theology which one cannot but admire, although one may not be able to share its optimism as to the chance of the two teachings ever becoming reconciled. How can they? Consider the unsatisfactory nature of the following speculations by

[1] Our ancestors were never "molluscs"; "worm" would be an appropriate word here.

[2] Review in the *Church Times* of May 31st, 1905, of the Dean of Westminster's book, *Some Thoughts on Inspiration*.

means of which the clerical evolutionist hopes to surmount the stumbling-block of the Fall.

### THE BISHOP OF WORCESTER'S THEORY.

Dr. Gore, Bishop of Worcester, now of Birmingham, who is an adherent of Evolution, speaks mysteriously of a "fall from without."[1] As the question is of enormous importance to the truth of Christianity, I propose to examine Dr. Gore's thesis at some length. He grants that the idea of special creation is inconceivable, and that our race has an animal ancestry, and then gives us the following description of primeval man, which (shades of our forefathers!) he assures us is according to the Bible and the enlightened ideas of early Christianity: "Man began at the bottom, immature, in the fullest sense of immaturity, totally undeveloped, but with a capacity for development." A correspondent of Dr. Gore's, anxious possibly to be let down gently in the matter of his ancestor, suggested "immature, but not deformed." This Dr. Gore accepted as a good phrase. Most of us would think that when our ancestor was at the stage, say, of the ape-like man he would be deformed according to existing notions of the human form divine, while, if only at the protoplasm stage, the question of form would hardly matter.

It has been explained to me by a clerical biologist that the Bishop meant that the Fall was not a fall from a completely developed form to one less developed, but that there was perversion of the

[1] This and the following quotations are from "Advent Lectures on Sin," delivered by Dr. Gore, then Bishop of Worcester, in St. Philip's Church, Birmingham. They were reported in the *Church Times* of December 4th, 11th, and 18th, 1903.

development, so that a rudimentary life which might have been developed one way has developed along a less favourable path—a common occurrence in ontogeny. However that may be, and whatever the physical or mental state of this creature at the time he "fell," was his previous state one of beautiful innocence and purity? What about those inherited animal instincts? Dr. Gore goes on to say that "humanity might have, with infinitely more rapidity, developed upward; it has been delayed, retarded by sin." Granted; but at what stage of development did this poor wretch ever get a proper chance? The Christian faith inculcates that there is no chance for him without belief. What belief did this immature man have to guide him?

However, let us see what more Dr. Gore may have to tell us on the Fall and Atonement. The words already quoted are from his second lecture to the Birmingham working men. In his third and last lecture he says: "He (God) appointed that man alone of creatures should have a twofold nature—that he should have fellowship with physical nature, but also that he should have fellowship with God. He (man) fell through a suggestion from without, and preferred wilfulness to obedience; he thus fell into sin, and sin, when it is finished, bringeth forth death. Note that, if sin is said to have caused death, Christ is said to have abolished death. 'He that believeth on Me shall never die.' It is death as men have known it, the end of their hopes, that sin introduced and Christ abolished."

Here, then, is the Bishop's answer regarding the "Fall" question. There has been a "fall through a suggestion from *without*," whatever that may happen to mean. I should have thought that, if there was a

fall at all, it was through a suggestion from *within*, much as Canon Wilson puts it.[1] Bishop Gore, however, probably feels that it has to be from *without* to agree with the Bible story of the temptation. We are told nothing further about this mysterious "without," and I ask: "Could anything be more vague and unsatisfactory than this explanation of the Fall?"

Assuming that determinists are wrong, and that the Creator is not responsible for the shortcomings of His creatures, the only fault for which primeval man could possibly be held to be answerable is that of not controlling his animal instincts so soon as he commenced to be conscious and could no longer claim the excuse of innocence. Probably he did his best, and began to improve himself ever so little. In that case, as the *Church Times* sapiently remarks, there was no Fall, but an advance. Or, adopting a compromise suggested by an American divine, he fell *upward!* If he did not strive as much as he might have done, there was, at all events, no sudden leap over a precipice; for the gift of increased consciousness, such as the human being now possesses, must have evolved very gradually. However, the creation of the world and all that therein is was also exceedingly gradual, and yet the pious find themselves able to consider the Bible account to be an accurate though allegorical representation of the process; so there is really nothing to prevent them from considering the account of a remarkable incident in a certain garden during a hot summer's day, shortly after man put in his appearance on this globe, to be a true representation of the perverse conduct of their ancestors through countless ages.

[1] See pp. 234–5.

For this so-called "Fall" we are to be visited with a death which will be the end of our hopes if we do not believe in Christ. This, then, is the new threat held over the unbeliever: he will forfeit his right to immortality. As it is in place of the old-fashioned consignment to hell, we may hope, for the sake of the human race as a whole, past and present, that the new Christian dogma is nearer the truth than the old. Most of us, however, will, I think, come to the conclusion that there has never been a "Fall" at all in any sense. Dr. Gore in one breath asks us to think man so much above the ape that his spiritual powers cannot have been evolved; yet, when science points out that they were evolved—that man *rose* so much above his relations—he still speaks of a *fall!* It is an outrage to our common sense. And, if there were a Fall, may we not say with the Persian poet?—

> Oh Thou who didst with Pitfall and with Gin
> Beset the Path I was to travel in,
> Thou wilt not with Predestined Evil round
> Enmesh me, and impute my Fall to Sin.

### THE ARCHDEACON OF MANCHESTER'S THEORY.

Archdeacon J. M. Wilson tells us[1] that "We are taking our part in the long struggle of good against evil. This has been often pictured to us as the struggle of God against some Personal Power of Evil which we call Satan, the fact of struggle suggesting two rival powers. But the evolutionary way of regarding it presents the struggle as one of the divine element in man struggling to overcome the purely

[1] In an address to the Students' Christian Union of Owens College, Manchester, on January 8th, 1904.

animal inheritance of lust and passion inherited from a far by-gone stage." Dr. Wilson, therefore, believes, as every thorough evolutionist must believe, that we have to look to an animal and not a human ancestor for the ultimate origin of what we call sin. But we want to know where the "Fall" comes in, and this he has explained elsewhere,[1] in what seems to me to be the only possible way open to an evolutionist. He says: "Man fell, according to science, when he first became conscious of the conflict of freedom and conscience; and each individual man falls as his ancestor fell." Dr. Wilson does not attempt to make out that there was any particular "fall" at any particular period in man's history, such as Dr. Gore apparently still clings to; but he plainly tells us: "I do not mean to say that there is a particular moment at which men fell: *it is not so.* It is a continuous struggle of good and evil." He continues: "I see in this nothing to conflict with a legitimate interpretation of the story of the Fall in the third chapter of Genesis. Such a narrative is not an illusion, still less a mere fiction; it is, as all teaching of spiritual truth must be, a temporary and figurative mode of expression." In other words, Dr. Wilson considers these early chapters of Genesis, and probably a great deal more of the Old Testament and some of the New, to be only an allegory. With regard to the Atonement difficulty, Dr. Wilson's argument is simply that "We need only to look at the world as it is to see the struggle of the two-fold nature in man; to see that it has need of a Redemption, of a Saviour." Few, I fear, will accept this latest explanation by

[1] In his interesting book, *Problems of Religion and Science*, p. 70.

a learned and earnest believer. Theologians, in Dr. Wilson's opinion, have made a grievous mistake when they say: "If the story of the Fall is not literally true, then it is literally false, and with it goes the need of a Redemption, of a Saviour." Yet most people—and these will include the whole body both of the old-fashioned orthodox and of the unbelievers—will certainly side with those "grievously mistaken" theologians.

### THE RATIONALIST'S THEORY.

To many of us there seems no need whatever to have recourse to the supernatural in order to account for the origin of sin. It is not one of the mysteries of life. When we know who our ancestors were, and hence why we possess certain instincts, it is quite unnecessary to predicate a "Fall." Details of the Rationalist's view of sin (and of the reasons for morality) will be found in the last chapter of this book.

### CONCLUSIONS.

These, then, are the difficulties created by the doctrine of Evolution. They are difficulties which appear completely to impugn the very nature of God, the veracity of the Bible, and the dogmas of sin and its atonement. We have already seen, by our study of Bible criticism and comparative mythology, how grave are the grounds for distrusting the Faith, and Evolution seems to be just the finishing stroke that was required for confirming our suspicions. We must now see whether there are any other arguments for belief of sufficient weight to warrant us in overstepping the boundaries of reason by an act of faith.

# THEISM

## Chapter VI.

## THE FAILURE OF THEISTIC ARGUMENTS

### § 1. *Preliminary Remarks.*

Our next task is to study the arguments for theism. Under these may be ranged — the cosmological argument, which concludes that there must be one eternal, unconditioned, self-existent cause; the teleological[1] argument, which concludes that nature's first cause must be an intelligence; and the ethical argument—the proof from the moral order and conscience—which concludes that the supreme intelligence must be a moral, a beneficent being. To these may be added the argument from religious experience.

#### THEISM, AND WHO ARE THEISTS.

First a word about theism. Theism is belief in the existence of a God as the creator and ruler of the universe. It assumes a living relation of God to his creatures, but does not define it. Although θεός and Deus are equivalent, theism has come to be distinguished from deism. The latter, according to some theologians, while equally opposed to atheism, denies or ignores the personality of God, and therefore

[1] Teleology is the name given to the doctrine of final causes; the theory of tendency to an end, or the arrangement of things as they are for a purpose.

denies[1] Christianity. Theism, on the contrary, underlies Christianity. Accordingly, in considering the truth or untruth of Christianity, we are concerned only with theism. However, it should be borne in mind that, although a man cannot be a Christian without being a Theist, he may be, and very often is in these days, a Theist without being a Christian. Of the cultured men who think they can still lay claim to the name of Christian, the bulk are, in point of fact, non-Christian Theists. Some of these quiet their conscience by the thought that they are still preserving a "reverent agnosticism" with regard to Christian dogmas; while certain anti-Haeckelites of the type of Professor E. Armitage (who urges scientific men to "remember that we only know appearances, and that whenever we affirm anything about what lies behind appearances we are making hazardous inferences"[2]) do not seem to be aware that they are adherents of one of the fundamental principles of agnosticism.

Theism in its modern Unitarian form is the creed of many of the most cultured and most religious minds of our time, alike in Europe and America; and it has also signally shown its power in contemporary India. Before I left the latter country a few years ago, I had an interesting discussion with one of the leading spirits of the Brahmo Samaj movement, and, in answer to my queries, he replied that it was with the Unitarians that he and his fellow thinkers were most in sympathy, and that they were never likely to turn Christians. This Unitarian theism, it

[1] See Appendix.

[2] *Contemporary Review* for May, art. "The Scientists and Common Sense."

may be remarked, is often seen to approximate to, or become absorbed into, pantheism or agnosticism. But it is not of Unitarians that I would speak so much as of the man who calls and often thinks himself a Christian proper, notwithstanding the admission that the Christian dogmas may be partially or wholly false. This misconception of "What it is to be a Christian"[1] is one of the many that tend to confuse and delay a straight reply to the question, "Is Christianity true?" Having digested these prefatory remarks, let us now proceed to consider the Theistic arguments.

## § 2. *The Existence of a First Cause—An Uncaused Cause.*[2]

The hypothesis of modern science is that everything as it now exists in the universe is the result of an infinite series of causes and effects; everything that happens is the result of something else that happened previously, and so on backwards to all eternity. The agnostic scientist says that we know nothing about this Infinite Cause, and that the idea of a First Cause is absurd. The Theist affirms that there is an Eternal Infinite Being who is the First Cause. He says that it is absurd not to believe in a First Cause, that materialistic theories are so absurd compared with his that for this reason alone he would remain a Theist. He appears entirely to lose sight of the fact that by predicating a First Cause he only

[1] Under this title there is a pamphlet (Charles H. Kelly, Paternoster Row) by the Ven J. M. Wilson, Archdeacon of Manchester, in which the latitudinarian views to which I refer are openly expressed. See Appendix.

[2] Flint's *Theism*, pp. 133–4.

removes the mystery a stage further back. He tells us nothing about the origin of the First Cause or the state of things that preceded it. The appearance of a First Cause upon the scene only increases the great mystery. Certainly it does not solve it. We are no forwarder. The creation of a mystery to explain a mystery is a very ancient custom, but it is a custom that has not met with the approbation of science.

The Theist apparently thinks, however, that he has science on his side. Thus, in the Baird Lectures of 1876, Dr. Flint stated that "the progress of science has not more convincingly and completely dispersed the once prevalent notion that the universe was created about 6,000 years ago than it has convincingly and completely established that everything of which our senses inform us has had a commencement in time."[1] This opinion is still proclaimed by the Church to be the opinion of science. But modern science does not point to a beginning of the scheme of things. The consensus of opinion is entirely the other way. So far as we know, the ultimate cause recedes for ever and ever beyond the time when there was no distinction of earth and sea and atmosphere, all being mingled together in nebulous matter. Where would the Theist fix the "commencement"? The gaps on which theology at one time relied are rapidly disappearing. The apparent chasm between the organic and inorganic, between the lifeless and that which lives, according to the latest conceptions of science, no longer exists. Man may even succeed in manufacturing life, so that yet another teleological argument may collapse.

[1] *Theism*, p. 102. This book is a standard apologetic work on Theism. Dr. Flint is also the writer of the article on "Theism" in the *Encyclopædia Britannica*.

## § 3. *The First Cause an Intelligence.*

### DESIGN AND DIRECTIVITY.

The argument from design is one which appeals perhaps more than any other to the average man. As he looks around and reflects, he feels that there must be design, and, therefore, a Designer. He feels also that God must be constantly present directing the carrying out of His design. He is in accord with the Theist who maintains that purpose and plan are manifest throughout the cosmos, and that, although it might be conceded that every step of the process has been achieved by the forces of Evolution, it is impossible to exclude the *presiding activity* of a mind which has planned the whole and predetermined the movements of every portion. We are to believe, then, that the Designer Himself put the forces in motion for the first time, that He knew exactly what would be the product of those forces down to the minutest detail and for all time, and yet, in face of the undeviating law-regulated cosmos which He has created, He in some way continues to guide these forces. From the very first step, the making of the electron and thence the atom, to the last, the making of man's brain, the Theist sees the finger of God. The mystery of life is thus taken to be explained or diminished by asserting that it is produced and controlled by some other mystery. The only alternative to this belief, so he maintains, is a universe of random chance and capricious disorder. But "Haeckel and his colleagues hold that the direction which the evolutionary agencies take is not 'fortuitous'; that they never could take but the one direction which

they have actually taken."[1] While "the Theist says the ultimate object must have been foreseen and the forces must have been guided, or they would never have worked steadily in this definite direction, the Monist says that these forces no more needed guiding than does a tramcar; there was only one direction possible for them."[2] To refute this the apologist gravely replies that, "if you cast to the ground an infinite (or a finite) number of letters, they might after infinite gyrations make a word here and there; but we should think the man an enthusiast who expected even a short sentence, and a fool if he ever expected them to make a poem." We are expected, it seems, to regard it as a miracle that natural forces should not lose their uniform character, and act miraculously! Evidently, either the question is begged or the analogy is absurd. An argument of this kind is worse than useless, for it only serves to demonstrate the hopelessness of the teleologist's position. Spinoza's position is more reasonable; for he conceives that all is the outcome of inexorable necessity—that neither chance nor purpose governs the eternal and the infinite.

### DIRECTIVITY.

Directivity has hitherto been insisted upon by Theists. It would not conform with our ideas of God that He should remain a passive observer so soon as He had invented a machine that would never stop, and had started it going. Yet interference with the machinery is inconceivable, the universe being ruled by eternal, immutable, and irrefragable laws. "The

[1] See p. 73 of *Haeckel's Critics Answered*, by Joseph McCabe.
[2] *Ibid*, p. 73.

only possible conception of telic [purposeful] action on a cosmic scale is that, from the start, the matter-force reality was of such a nature that it would infallibly evolve into the cosmos we form part of to-day. Any other conception of 'guidance' and 'control' is totally unthinkable. And, as a fact, Theists are settling down to formulate their position in that way. The interference, as Ward says, took place *before* the process began."[1] A Law Maker can be postulated, but there is not a particle of evidence that He is also a Law Breaker.

Attempts are still made, however, by clerical scientists to prove that there is directivity. The Rev. Professor George Henslow, in his book, *Present-Day Rationalism Critically Examined*, argues that the tendency which living organisms show to develop in one direction rather than another, and their capacity to respond to environment, betoken a directing Mind. Granting, for the moment, that the doctrine of Natural Selection is false or inadequate, it seems to me that the acknowledged facts of the "struggle for existence" and "survival of the fittest" sufficiently dispose of this new apology. Organisms do *not* all adapt themselves to environment, and their fate, in consequence, is first one of increasing misery, and finally of extinction. Only those that do adapt themselves survive. It appears that a scientist when he turns apologist is conveniently able to forget all but the more fortunate organisms.

### DESIGN.

If the evidence for a *directing* Mind has to be given up, the difficulties of a Theist are certainly increased.

[1] *Haeckel's Critics Answered*, p. 74.

There would be difficulties, for instance, regarding the utility of prayer. Still, he could think with Father Waggett that "the interaction of forces *inherent* in the whole produces the infinite variety of living beauty which we see."[1] And he can still join with Dr. Flint in exclaiming: "Every atom, every molecule, must, even in what is ultimate in it, bear the impress of a Supernatural Power and Wisdom; must reflect the glory of God, and proclaim its dependence upon Him."[2] To remain a Theist, however, one must have not only evidence of design, but of the benevolent intention of the Designer. Before considering the latter question, I venture to offer a few further remarks about the former. Is there consistent evidence of design?

*Beauty.*—As a proof of design we are asked by the Theist to contemplate the beauty and sublimity which the universe exhibits. Let us contemplate, then, the beauty of the Bay of Naples. Is it not purely accidental, purely the outcome of natural agencies, of effects produced by position, distance, etc.? Again, "the beauty of the diatoms that are brought from the lowest depths of the ocean, the beauty of the radiolaria that swarm about the coast, and the beauty of a thousand minute animal structures, are obviously not designed and purposed beauties. They were unknown until the microscope was invented; the polariscope reveals yet further beauties; the telescope yet more. The idea of these being designed for our, or for God's, entertainment belongs, as Mr. Mallock says, 'to a pre-scientific age.'"[3] It

[1] *Religion and Science*, pp. 89–90.
[2] *Theism*, Lecture IV.
[3] See p. 76 of *Haeckel's Critics Answered.*

is sometimes urged that the tendency of evolution is towards greater beauty. Is it? That all depends upon what your idea of beauty may be—whether you will consider the structure best suited to its environment beautiful or otherwise. We are told that there are signs that the human race will one day be toothless. At present we admire pretty teeth; perhaps our descendants will go into raptures over a toothless gum. That their sense of beauty may not be outraged, let us hope it may be so. The hideous pigmies of Central Africa probably think themselves beautiful, and in the distant future, when the conditions of existence on this globe have radically changed, and when its inhabitants have adapted themselves to those conditions, the new "beauties" may possibly be quite as ugly as "missing links." After all, beauty is a matter of taste. The sufficient objection to the "beauty" argument is, to my mind, contained in a very few words: "Look at the ugliness! Who designed that?"

*Harmony.*—But, it will be urged, if beauty is a poor argument, at least you must grant that the general harmony in Nature still remains to be accounted for. Beauty is only one of its countless harmonies. The objection to this argument is a very simple one. Nature is full of discords. Ugliness is by no means the only discord. It is because this is so little realised that M. Elie Metchnikoff has devoted nearly the whole of his book, *The Nature of Man*, to the discussion of the disharmonies in man's nature alone. There are disharmonies in the organisation of the digestive system, in the organisation and activities of the reproductive apparatus, in the family and social instincts, and in the instinct of self-preservation,

etc. For instance, in the human body there are disharmonies of the wisdom teeth, the *bête-noire* of dentistry; of the useless vermiform appendage, the seat of the disease appendicitis; of the large intestine, which could very well be dispensed with, and is the seat of many grave diseases, such as dysentery, and so on. The perversions of instinct among human beings (another disharmony) are likely to be attributed by the conservative Theist to the Devil, and by the liberal to Dr. Gore's "Fall from Without," so it will be better to take an example from the animal world. Darwin informs us that the "female of one of the emus (*Dromæus irroratus*), as soon as she catches sight of her progeny, becomes violently agitated, and, notwithstanding the resistance of the father, appears to use her utmost endeavours to destroy them" (*Descent of Man*, vol. ii., chap. xvi., pp. 204–205). To those who still hold by this argument I can only recommend a perusal of Professor Metchnikoff's book of disharmonies, and would beg them to remember that it has been written by a man whose profession and attainments entitle his opinions on such a subject to the highest consideration. The cruelty attending the process by which harmony is attained has already been commented upon by me in § 2 of the previous chapter.

### DIFFERENCES OF OPINION AMONG THEISTIC APOLOGISTS.

I have finally to call attention to the fact that even among the apologists themselves there is considerable difference of opinion as to the value of these arguments for Theism. Dr. Flint exclaims: "Strange as it may seem, there are many *Theists* at the present day who represent it [revelation of God

in the whole of nature external to us] as insufficient, or even worthless, and who join the Atheists in denying that God's existence can be proved, and in affirming that all the arguments for His existence are inconclusive and sophistical. Such Theists seem to me not only the best allies of Atheists, but even more effective labourers in the cause of unbelief than Atheists themselves."[1] Since Dr. Flint wrote these words the number of "such Theists" has vastly increased. It is owned on all sides by the advanced school of apologists that God's existence cannot be proved by an appeal to the reasoning faculties; and, among other arguments, that from design is gradually being discarded.

Father Waggett offers us interesting information regarding this argument in his little book, *Religion and Science*.[2] He considers that Paley and others of the old teleologists were wrong in leaning upon a narrow argument from design. "It need not here be repeated," he says, "that the evidence of such workmanship cannot prove God in the true sense of an *infinite* and *all*-wise Cause; but only a cause possessed of immense wisdom and immense though limited power, a Demiurgus of the greatest force and the most minute care, but not a Creator in the sense of theology."[3] Father Waggett, who is a biologist, and, therefore, necessarily an Evolutionist, would not be disconcerted if living things were manufactured in the laboratory to-morrow. In his opinion, "If anywhere we catch nature in the making, if we surprise the sequence by which even man himself gained his

[1] *Theism*, p. 79.
[2] Chapter on "Theism and Natural Selection."
[3] *Religion and Science*, p. 83.

difference from other things, we shall not by this find reverence lowered.....It is a *theological* readjustment which is required, and not one in 'natural science.'"[1] The position here taken up is wise, and one that all who remain Theists will eventually have to adopt. But for most of us these theological readjustments are no easy matter. We reason that Paley's *Evidences* have in their time assisted men to be Theists, and now his arguments are condemned by the better informed. How do we know that the same fate may not await the new arguments of the Christian evolutionist? How is it that God allowed earnest and learned divines to commit themselves to arguments in proof of His existence, the subsequent overthrow of which has been a potent cause for unbelief?

## § 4. *The First Cause a Beneficent Intelligence.*

### A PERSONAL GOD.

As ages roll on, God's attributes—or rather, we should say, the attributes given Him by man—are continually altering. All that the early gods demanded was fear and worship. Even the Jehovah of the Jews asked at first little else than this. Anthropomorphic conceptions of God are now admitted by the cultured to be a thing of the past. Do they not, however, still survive when human emotions, such as love and anger, happiness and sorrow, are attributed to the Deity? We acknowledge God to be infinite, and, consequently, incomprehensible by finite minds; yet we imagine and attempt to argue that He possesses the same qualities—those we most admire—as ourselves! "How can we believe in a *personal* God?"

[1] *Religion and Science*, pp. 89, 90.

asks the Rationalist. "A person must have limitations, or he ceases to be a person." However, we must not forget that in philosophy and theology the word "person" simply implies "a nature endowed with consciousness," and does not involve limits. Demurring to this definition, there still remains another difficulty. In all our experience and knowledge, emotions and intelligence are connected with nerve structures; how, then, can we attribute these qualities to a Being who is described to us as devoid of any nerve structure? I know of no answer that could be called satisfactory from a Theistic standpoint.

In the previous section we considered the doctrine of final causes. This doctrine, as Spinoza points out,[1] "does away with the perfection of God; for, if God acts for an object, He necessarily desires something which He lacks." The Theist goes a step further than the mere teleologist, and insists on a *benevolent* purpose throughout nature. Is he, then, oblivious to Spinoza's objection? No, he is not; and therefore it is that he struggles to save his personal God by an infinite extension of the limits of His personality. In fine, Theism, in the hands of its modern advocates, and in spite of the seeming orthodoxy of the phrase, "Divine Immanence," is often nothing less than another form of Pantheism.

### DIVINE IMMANENCE IN NATURE.

The Church's great philosopher to-day, the Rev. J. R. Illingworth, D.D., argues[2] that "Divine Immanence in Nature" excludes Pantheism—the belief that

[1] In *The Ethics*, Part i., appendix.
[2] In his work, *Divine Immanence*.

God is *merely* immanent in nature—as well as Deism and Monism, while it harmonises with Trinitarianism. We are to "conceive of God as at once transcending *and* immanent in nature."[1] He admits that "this relationship may be incomprehensible,"[2] but states that "we know it in our own case to be a fact."[3] Afterwards he puts the question, "Is the universe His body or His work?"[4] and proceeds to explain that the Trinitarian conception of God furnishes, or helps to furnish, an answer to this question. "It is," he maintains, "intellectually the most satisfactory."[5] It apparently is so to certain subtle and biassed intellects; but the question is, Is it so, will it ever be so, to the average mortal?

### A FACT IN HISTORY.

In another place,[6] when speaking again of the doctrine of the Trinity, he says: "Men forget that it supports and is supported by the whole weight of a fact in history, with which nothing else in the wide world can even for a moment be compared. That fact is the age-long empire of Jesus Christ over the hearts of men." This, then, is the final argument in support of the Christian dogmas, including this the most incomprehensible of them all. Why should not the Buddhist claim the same authority for the dogmas of his faith? The evidential value is precisely the same. Turn to any well-known work bearing on this phase of the question. Read, we will say, Edwin Arnold's poem, *The Light of Asia;* or, better still, read Mr. Fielding's books, *The Soul of a People*

[1] *Divine Immanence*, pp. 71–2. [2] *Ibid*, pp. 71–2. [3] *Ibid*, pp. 71–2.
[4] *Ibid*, pp. 71–2. [5] *Ibid*, p. 73. [6] *Ibid*, p. 161.

and *The Hearts of Men*, and hear the words of one who has lived for years among Buddhists and studied their hearts.

That an ideal should reign over the hearts of men is no new thing; much less is this a cause for marvel when "One has come, claiming to be God made manifest—manifest in order to attract our love."[1] Christian apologists urge that He has not only attracted the hearts of men in the past, but still retains His hold upon their affections, and that therein lies an essential difference between Christianity and all other religions. Christianity, say they, in this respect at least, stands pre-eminently alone. Is not Buddhism, then, one of the great living religions of the present day? Has it not existed during twenty-four centuries? Does it not at the present time surpass, in the number of its followers and the area of its prevalence, any other form of creed? Is not Gautama Buddha worthy of men's love, if we are to credit the best authenticated records of his life? "Discordant in frequent particulars," writes[2] Sir Edwin Arnold, "and sorely overlaid by corruptions, inventions, and misconceptions, the Buddhistical books yet agree in the one point of recording nothing —no single act or word—which mars the perfect purity and tenderness of this Indian teacher, who united the truest princely qualities with the intellect of a sage and the passionate devotion of a martyr." Loving disciples, living in an age of ignorance and superstition, piously ascribed to him divine powers, and, disobeying his mandate, gave him fervent worship.

[1] *Divine Immanence*, p. 161.
[2] In the preface to his poem.

That worship, that adoration, still persists. So likewise the adoration of Jesus Christ still persists. This is certainly a fact in history; but can we safely build upon it the metaphysical theories of the Christian Faith?

### THE PAST AND PRESENT POSITION OF THE ETHICAL ARGUMENT.

In my comments upon Dr. Illingworth's views regarding "Divine Immanence" I fear I have digressed somewhat from the subject at present under consideration — the Theistic argument from a Beneficent Intelligence. "The ethical argument held a very subordinate place in the estimation of writers on natural theology until Kant rested on it almost the whole weight of Theism. It has ever since been prominent, and has been the argument most relied upon to produce practical conviction."[1] What was once the weakest argument has now become the strongest. Why? Not, I take it, because anything has occurred to make the weaker any stronger, but because what was thought to be the strongest is now found to be weaker than the weakest! How can the ethical argument be maintained in face of objections which continue to become ever graver as our knowledge increases? Theists contend[2] that there must be a future life if only because the glaring wrongs of this world have to be righted. What is this but a naïve admission that the proofs of the Deity's benevolence are sadly wanting?

[1] Art. "Theism" in the *Encyclopædia Britannica*.

[2] *E.g.*, see p. 15 of *The Three Superstitions*, by Dr. Keeling, an ex-professor of gynecology.

EVIL FOR WHICH MAN IS *NOT* HELD RESPONSIBLE.

The problem of pain, and of evil generally, has been partially discussed in the chapter on "Evolution." The importance of this problem is very great, for, by the universal consent of Christendom (*not* of mankind, as we shall see later on), the very name of God carries with it the sense of goodness, the highest and best that we know of or can imagine. For this reason it is customary for the pious to regard every calamity reverently as a punishment from God, or as serving some good purpose. Thus the German Emperor, imbued from childhood with this pious theory, warned his people that the Japanese had been sent as a scourge from God, and Father Bernard Vaughan (preaching at Lancaster on August 26th, 1906) declared that God had uttered warnings to *England* by the eruption of Vesuvius and the San Franciscan and Chilian earthquakes. Can this supposition be maintained when the catastrophe occurs in the wrong place, when tornadoes and earthquakes destroy God's own temples, and when the innocent suffer for the guilty? With the opinion of the scientist we are, or ought to be by now, familiar. "The fundamental axiom of scientific thought is that there is not, never has been, and never will be, any disorder in Nature. The admission of the occurrence of any event which was not the logical consequence of the immediately antecedent events, according to those definite, ascertained, or unascertained rules which we call the 'laws of Nature,' would be an act of self-destruction on the part of science" (Huxley on Catastrophes, p. 247 of his *Essays on Controverted Questions*).

I remember, at the time of the terrible catastrophe

in Martinique, due to the eruption of Mont Pelée, asking a lady: "Do you think this wholesale slaughter and awful suffering has any connection with the wickedness of the afflicted people?" "Certainly," she replied; "they must have been very wicked people." It just so happened that the only man who escaped scatheless was a murderer who had been imprisoned in a cell below ground. So the theory she and I had been brought up to believe in would not work, whichever way you looked at it. The apologist has usually a number of strings to his bow; and, as the Old Testament teaching concerning bad men descending "quick into the pit" would not suit, he might argue that the criminal was given an opportunity for repentance. In that case, we must suppose that all the others who perished had no need of repentance. Again, with regard to the terrible tortures that many endured, it could be argued that those "whom the Lord loveth He chasteneth"; but what possible object could there be in this chastening during the last moments of their life upon earth? The agony of the death-struggle, suffered by the good and the bad alike, has yet to be shown to be in accord with the theory of a benevolent Deity.

The old-fashioned idea that catastrophes, plagues, famines, etc., were sent as punishments for our misdoings is gradually being modified. Dr. Flint says distinctly: "I cannot agree with those who think there is no mystery in mere pain—that it is sufficiently accounted for by moral evil."[1] It seems a pity that his advocacy for benevolence in the Deity should lead him afterwards to qualify this sensible

[1] *Theism*, p. 245.

statement by an amazing assertion which begs the whole question. "The character of pain itself," he says, "is such as to indicate that its author must be a benevolent being—one who does not afflict for his own pleasure, but for his creatures' profit."[1] The profit consists, we are told, in the fact that we are prevented through fear of pain from running into danger. How peculiarly appropriate and consolatory such a view of pain must be to, let us say, a person crippled with rheumatoid arthritis! Man's highly sensitive and delicate organisation inevitably entails pain when no useful purpose of this kind can possibly be served; yet we are to suppose that an Omnipotent Being devised this crude and cruel method for teaching us to avoid the perils with which He Himself has surrounded us! One of our greatest living surgeons, Sir Frederick Treves, assures us[2] that "the symptoms of disease are marked by purpose, and the purpose is beneficent." "The processes of disease," he goes on to explain, "aim not at the destruction of life, but at the saving of it." Here, indeed, is more grist for the mill of the apologist. But what does this special pleading amount to? To this: Because through suffering we *may* survive a dangerous disease, we should be grateful to the Supreme Intelligence who created the preservative as well as the destructive microbes; we should be grateful to the Almighty who has fashioned friend and foe, and who, much to our discomfort, has selected our interior economy for the battlefield! Surely, if the surmise of benevolence is to be entertained at all, it must be at the sacrifice of

[1] *Theism*, p. 246.
[2] In an address at the inaugural meeting of the session of the Edinburgh Philosophical Institution, held on October 31st, 1905.

the surmise of omnipotence. The Supreme Intelligence cannot be an "Almighty God" if He be the "Father of all mercies."

There are Theists who candidly admit the perplexities of the situation. On the horns of a dilemma they have no option but to fall back upon the primitive theory: All unaccountable evil is the work of a hostile and evil power which seeks continually to frustrate the benevolent intentions of the Creator. "Speaking for myself," says the author of *Pro Fide*,[1] "I am unable to believe that hideous and excruciating diseases, such as cancer, which affect both men and animals, and which cannot, in the case of *animals* at least, be explained as a moral discipline, are the work of a good and benevolent God. I endorse absolutely the words of Dr. E. A. Abbott. 'I cannot think,' he says, 'of diseases and pain, and the conflict in the animal world for life and death, as being, so to speak, part of God's *first intention*.'" Disease, suffering, the struggle for existence, and the law of prey are then, after all, the Devil's handiwork, and so is also, presumably, the law of the survival of the fittest. (Christian evolutionists, take note! In exonerating and extolling the evolutionary processes, you are exonerating and extolling the works of the Devil!) "The Zoroastrian view," he continues, "must be rejected because it postulates two first principles, which is a plain metaphysical impossibility." The view which is not open

[1] *A Text-Book of Apologetics*, by Charles Harris, B.D., Lecturer in Theology and Parochialia, St. David's College, Lampeter; Examining Chaplain to the Bishop of Llandaff. (London: John Murray, 1905.) A noticeable point about this latest contribution to apologetic literature is that, though it purposes to deal with *all* the chief arguments which have been urged against religion, it leaves the weightiest argument of all—the argument from Comparative Mythology—practically untouched. Why is this?

to this or any other objection, and which he calls the Theistic view, "supposes that a large share of the government of the material universe was committed, at the creation, to a *personal spirit*, of great, but not unlimited, power and intelligence, who, having been originally created good, subsequently fell, and introduced evil and disorder into the world.....This hypothesis of a personal devil has many advantages. It explains the whole of the facts; it avoids the postulation of two first causes; it vindicates the moral perfection of the Deity; and it allows the optimistic hope to be entertained that in the end good will triumph over evil." All this is highly instructive. For it means that, in the opinion of an erudite apologist of the Church of England, flourishing A.D. 1906, the moral perfection of the Deity can only be vindicated on the hypothesis of a personal devil! Doubtless this hypothesis—and, remember, it is nothing more than a hypothesis, and one that is now generally discredited—fits in admirably; but the question is, Are we to accept it, however imaginary and opposed to the facts of science, just because it is so suitable?

There remains the usual retort of the religionist when closely cornered: "The finite mind cannot expect to understand the Infinite." He appears to forget entirely that when he advances proofs of the God of his heart he himself is using his finite mind, and that his opponents therefore have an equal right to use theirs when criticising his "proofs." This by the way. The particular point we have to notice is that the appeal to this negative argument amounts to an admission that the proofs do indeed appear all the other way. Thus in the question now before us,

"Is the First Cause a beneficent intelligence?" we find that a statement confidently proclaimed by the pious is not only unsupported by evidence, but in spite of it—a mere assertion suggested by the emotions. With more modesty and (may I add?) with more common sense, the agnostic disclaims any knowledge of God, holding that human knowledge is limited to experience, and that, since the absolute and unconditioned, if it exists at all, cannot fall within experience, we have no right to assert anything whatever with regard to it.

EVIL FOR WHICH MAN *IS* HELD RESPONSIBLE.

The very existence of the God of our hearts depends upon the proof of His morality. *The argument from moral order* seems at first sight a strong one. Morality, even adopting the naturalist's explanation that it is only a social instinct, can be regarded as the result of a divine spark. Its beneficial influence on the happiness of the individual and the well-being of the race cannot be too strongly insisted upon as a well-ascertained fact. "Virtue is self-rewarding, and vice is self-punishing."[1] But the Rationalist asks: "Why design man's nature so that he is more likely to go wrong, when he gets the chance, than to go right; and this in despite of the moral or social instinct?" The usual answer of the religionist is that, if we could not do wrong, we should be mere machines. "No doubt," says the author of *Pro Fide*, "if God had made us what Mr. Huxley says we are, *conscious automata*, we should have been incapable of sin; but it is better to be men, with all the glorious possibilities of freedom and virtue, than to be machines, however

[1] *Theism*, p. 228.

excellent." Now, do we allow our children to choose for themselves when we know they will choose wrongly? Do we not guard them against the inglorious possibilities—the slavery of vice? If we fail in our duty to them and they fall, should we add to our guilt by perpetrating on them unimaginable cruelties? Again, do we not prefer the fellowship of the good-*natured?* Yet these, according to the religionist, are the veriest automata compared with those who have inherited vicious or disagreeable characteristics, and do their best to fight against them. Be this as it may, the fact remains that the less fortunately endowed are seldom able to raise themselves up to the level of the more fortunately endowed—environment may, of course, elevate the one, as it may also degrade the other—and there is no doubt whose society we prefer. Why should it be better for men to be capable of—or, rather, may we not say prone to—sin? Why should their Maker grant them "glorious possibilities" which He has denied to Himself? Why should He alone be a machine that cannot go wrong? Surely there is something amiss in an argument that furnishes such inadequate excuses in order to explain why the Designer gave us natures infinitely inferior to His own.

> Oh, Thou who man from basest clay didst make,
> And e'en for Paradise devised the snake,
> For all the sin wherewith the face of man
> Is blackened, man's forgiveness give—and *take!*

Some of Nature's plans would appear to be specially designed to bring out the worst side of the diverse nature implanted in man. The plan of the struggle for existence is a palpable instance. Take another—take the plan for the reproduction of life. Could any *Omnipotent* Being be proud of it? Let alone the

unfair division of pain, which the discredited Eden story can now no longer account for, is it helpful to man in his struggle to improve his nature? The plan being God's plan, it is enjoined upon us that the procreation of children is a sacred duty; but it is also plainly intimated that to abstain from marriage altogether is yet more meritorious. Similarly in Mithraism, Buddhism, the religions of ancient America and other pre-Christian cults, the sanctity of the celibate life is upheld. If man is not doing his best in obeying the behests of his Maker, how can he do right? Has he been given a fair chance when an instinct so hurtful is implanted in him that even its natural gratification in the divinely appointed manner is likely to hinder him in the cultivation of his spiritual nature; this although matrimony was ordained—so our prayer-book tells us—for a remedy against sin? The truth is that this *necessary* instinct, quite apart from its responsibility for much sorrow and strife and quite apart from its terrible tendency to perversion, is innately prejudicial to our moral elevation, and, in order to preserve a healthy, happy mind, the less we allow our thoughts to dwell upon its fulfilment the better.

Again, "a very little disorder in the organisation of the brain suffices to cause hallucinations of the senses, to shake the intellect from its throne, to paralyse the will, and to *corrupt the sentiments and affections*,"[1] "How precise and skilful," remarks Dr. Flint, lost in admiration of the Designer, "must be the adjustment between the sound brain and the sane mind!" "How fiend-like," says the horrified Rationalist, "would be the Intellect

[1] *Theism*, "The Argument from Order."

which could have exercised its ingenuity to devise a mechanism inherently liable to get out of order, and thereby to transform its unhappy possessor into a fool or villain." In the event of the latter result, moreover, man, according to Christ's teaching (if honestly interpreted), is to suffer eternal torment!

### CONSCIENCE.

Regarding theories of the origin of conscience such as those of J. S. Mill, Bain, Darwin, and Spencer, Dr. Flint remarks: "It does not matter whether conscience be primary or derivative; it exists."[1] That it does matter is shown by the fact that the bulk of the apologists still stoutly maintain that conscience is a special attribute of man—a divine instinct—and is not derived from the lower animals. We have, I think, gone into this sufficiently in the previous chapter, and I shall confine my remarks to another aspect of the question—the fallibility of the moral consciousness.

"The existence," it is urged, "of a moral principle within us, of a conscience which witnesses against sin and on behalf of holiness, is of itself evidence that God must be a moral being, one who hates sin and loves holiness."[2] Given the existence of a personal God, this argument is plausible enough till we examine it more closely. The liability of conscience to err is, or should be, a platitude. Its two components—the reason and the emotions—both being fallible, it necessarily follows that conscience must have the same quality. We have only to think for a moment to discover innumerable

[1] *Theism*, p. 226. [2] *Ibid*, p. 67.

examples in proof of this. An illustration which occurs to me, and which will hurt no one's susceptibilities, is that of the Wa Daruma. This is an East African tribe practising a strict morality which is all the more remarkable on account of the gross immorality of the neighbouring tribes. Nevertheless, the conscience of the Wa Daruma bids them kill their twin offspring. If conscience, then, be fallible, how is it a Theistic proof? Because, though it may make a mistake through an untutored reason, or through a reason clouded by deceptive emotions, the consciousness that there is a right or wrong at all is sufficient proof of a moral intelligence? So be it; but it is passing strange that God should allow conscience to deceive us. John Locke well said, many years ago: "Children are travellers newly arrived in a strange country: we should therefore *make conscience not to deceive them.*" Are we not children of God in a strange country? *We* would not deceive our children. The acquittal of conscience gives pleasure, as the condemnation gives pain—remorse—and every man must obey his conscience if he would be happy. What a thousand pities it seems that it should ever lead him into error! Should it not be a divine intuition of the right both in our religious beliefs and in our conduct?

It *is* an intuition of the right, the believer will say, when it tells you to believe in Christ and God. I would gladly think so; but every believer of every creed on the face of the earth says the same about his belief, and hence the amazing persistence of erroneous beliefs. When the voice of conscience is composed of a blind reliance on intuition (*i.e.*, on the emotions) and a distrust of reason, how can the result be otherwise? The whole question of the truth of beliefs

hinges upon whether intuition can or cannot be relied upon. We know that mistakes do occur through trusting to intuition, especially in the matter of beliefs; how, then, can we assume that it is infallible? Strange as the freaks of faith among cultured persons may appear, they are perfectly intelligible. They are the result of reliance on intuition rather than on reason. I will give an example. Who more logical, apparently, than John Henry Newman, the coadjutor of Whately in his popular work on logic? His illogical conduct is, therefore, particularly instructive. In 1832, after a visit to Rome, he wrote describing the Roman Catholic religion as polytheistic, degrading, and idolatrous,[1] and then, after all, entered the Roman Catholic Church in 1845. He did so because he found that the difficulties of the creed and of the canon of Scripture were insurmountable unless over-ridden by the authority of the Church. To escape becoming an agnostic he elected to join a Church calling herself infallible. He was able to come to this decision although, to his own knowledge, her infallibility was belied by her conduct! Further, so eloquent was his reasoning on the subject, so apparently logical, that some hundreds of clergymen joined him in making their submission to the Church of Rome. Underlying all this apparent inconsistency is the assertion, so eloquently pleaded by Cardinal Newman, of the

[1] This description is borne out by the Rev. A. R. Robertson, D.D., in *The Roman Catholic Church in Italy* (Morgan & Scott), a book which was accorded a flattering reception in January, 1903, by the King of Italy. In Southern Italy the Church's methods remind one of what Paschal tells us concerning the Jesuits—how they kept men wicked, lest, if they became virtuous, the priests should lose their hold upon them.

supremacy of conscience and the correctness of intuition. So also have asserted the followers of every religion from all time, and to what have their consciences and intuitions led them—to truth, or to a pot-pourri of absurd and conflicting beliefs? We have the testimony of all history to prove the extreme fallibility of conscience. Conscience possesses no divine spark to keep a man from acting wrongly through ignorance. Even when knowledge is present we see, as in Cardinal Newman's case, that the voice of conscience may still speak incorrectly; for reason is swamped when emotion's flood-gate is left ajar.

Cardinal Newman's opinions have a special interest for us at the present time. He held that, "*apart from an interior and unreasoned conviction, there is no cogent proof of the existence of God*"; that "the man who has not this interior conviction *has no choice but to remain an agnostic*, while the man who has it *is bound sooner or later to become a Roman Catholic.*"[1]

So inexplicable did his motives appear that Charles Kingsley accused him of saying that "truth for its own sake need not be, and, on the whole, ought not to be, a virtue of the Roman clergy." Newman's *Apologia pro Vita Sua*, however, leaves no doubt of the author's own personal rectitude. His premises—the infallibility of conscience and intuition—were false. But that is not an unusual feature of Christian apologetics. The keen intellects of the two pious brothers, John Henry and Francis William, were really buried beneath a mass of preconceptions. That of the latter, however, being less submissive, proceeded to a slow and sure upheaval, and finally

[1] *Encyclopædia Britannica*, art. "Newman, John Henry."

Francis Newman rejected Christianity altogether.[1] In the *Apologia pro Vita Sua* we find, I think, the key to Cardinal Newman's convictions. *He was intensely superstitious*, and inclined also to be timid. On the opening page, where he gives the recollections of his boyhood, we read: "I used to wish the Arabian tales were true." And again: "I was very superstitious, and for some time previous to my conversion (when I was fifteen) used constantly to cross myself on going into the dark."

### FREEWILL.

In my remarks on the "evil for which man is held responsible," I have alluded to the Rationalist's contention that man cannot be justly blamed for his actions, and that, if there be a God, He alone is to blame. This opens up the question of Freewill *v.* Determinism—a thorny question, which I should prefer, if only for considerations of space and my readers' patience, to leave severely alone. A whole volume would be necessary to present the case for Determinism adequately, and I am fully aware that a few brief words will fail to convince; but, if I can remove a single iota of the misconceptions on this subject, I shall feel rewarded.

Kant defines an act of volition as an act which is determined by the anticipatory idea of the result of the act. Although he maintains that there must be a moral God, he fully admits that the forecast or anticipatory idea is the inevitable effect of precedent conditions, such as temperament (heredity), education (environment), and the like; and in a well-known

[1] See art. "Francis William Newman," by Francis Gribble, *The Fortnightly*, July, 1905.

passage he says that, if the whole history of the subject could be known, the voluntary acts of a man might be predicted with the same certainty as an eclipse. The tendency of modern psychology is in the same direction. All voluntary acts, we are told, depend on the memory of involuntary acts of the same sort previously performed. It is true that a few Christian psychologists leave room for a "sheer heave" of the will by means of which an idea naturally feeble is fortified and held in place; but when they speak in this wise they speak as metaphysicians. No metaphysical argument, it seems to me, can reconcile this inflexible causality with *true* freedom of will. How can the will be at one and the same time fettered and free? There is, I grant, every appearance of freewill; but it belongs to the category of appearances which deceive.

If we accept the Christian contention, we have to believe that a benevolent God gives us a free will, the power to choose between Him and the Devil, knowing, as in His omniscience He must, that the vast majority will make a sad use of their gift! The modern Christian admits that heredity and environment have their say also. Thus there are, in all, four forces struggling for the mastery—God, the Devil, heredity and environment; and it is the duty of the divinely-implanted free will to choose between them. Rather, is it not that there are two forces, and two forces only—heredity and environment—acting upon our brain, and our choice is the resultant of them? Undoubtedly man, as a self-conscious and reflecting animal, has what may be called the power of choice; but the way this power will be used would be a foregone conclusion did we

know the sum-total of the effect of heredity and environment up to the moment of its use. "But," it may be objected, "surely there is such a thing as will-power. We can overcome our heredity and environment by the exercise of our will. Temptations to which the weak-willed succumb do not affect the strong-willed. Here, at least, we have a distinct instance in which heredity and environment are overcome." Yes, it is true, of course, that heredity and environment are continually being overcome by the happy possessor of sufficient will-power; but what we have to bear in mind is that it is not a portion, but the whole, of a man's heredity and environment which must be taken into consideration. In the case of the man with the strong will, it is still his heredity and environment which have in the first instance settled the line of conduct to which, once resolved upon, he adheres so tenaciously. And, again, this particular quality of the mind which enables him to keep to his resolution is, like all other qualities of the mind, itself the product of heredity and environment.

The Determinism of science and the Freewill of metaphysics are essentially antagonistic. Determinism is completely subversive of Christian teaching. It is directly opposed to the Thirty-nine Articles of religion. Not only does it imply that man is not to blame for his actions, but that, if there be a God, He, and He alone, is to blame. Christian theologists are therefore its strenuous opponents. In their apologetic efforts one finds the strangest misconceptions of what is meant in a broad sense by heredity and environment. The best apology I have seen so far is by the Rev. P. N. Waggett, in a tractate

called *Science and Conduct*.[1] Father Waggett seems to realise better than most of his fellow-clerics the enormous influence of heredity and environment. Still he comes to the conclusion that "when, under given circumstances," a man "does what, *under those circumstances*, and with his given constitution, he usually does not do," he is exercising "some inward spring." The fallacy in this argument is the common one. The effect of environment *up to* the moment of action has not been considered. The obscurity of the expression "given constitution" is doubtless unintentional, but it is none the less misleading. Father Waggett would be the first to admit that something must have occurred meanwhile to account for the new frame of mind. It is for him to show that an alteration in environment is not all that has occurred, and that there is room for this "inward spring."

Will not the acceptance of this doctrine have a paralysing effect upon us? On the contrary. We shall be better able to discern where our salvation lies. We shall pay far more attention to the real forces which determine conduct. We shall devote our energies to combating bad heredity with good environment; and we shall do this with the knowledge that not only ourselves and our associates, but our descendants also, will reap the benefit. We shall fly from unhealthy thoughts, and avoid the surroundings likely to give rise to them. We shall welcome healthy thoughts and seek helpful surroundings.

The doctrine of determinism is thought likely to corrupt our moral character, but, in reality, it compares favourably with religious doctrines. The belief in

[1] Being an address given at the Pusey House, Oxford.

God's omniscience leads the Mohammedan to fatalism, and the Christian to the doctrine of predestination. If a Christian really believed as he professes, if he could honestly subscribe to the seventeenth article of his Creed—in which it is stated that "before the foundations of the world were laid God hath constantly decreed by His counsel secret to us, to deliver from curse and damnation *those whom He hath chosen* [the italics are mine, of course] in Christ out of mankind"—God's Predestination would indeed be "a dangerous downfall," "thrusting men into desperation." The doctrine of predestination, therefore, appears, without doubt, to be ethically mischievous. The doctrine of Determinism, on the other hand, teaches a man to fight pernicious hereditary instincts with the weapon of environment, and to keep a tender place in his heart for unfortunates who succumb.[1] *Tout comprendre c'est tout pardonner.*

## § 5. *Religious Experience.*

### MYSTICISM AND CONVERSION.

Of late, the argument from "Religious Experience" has been much to the front, and nothing written on the subject has created a deeper impression, or been more cordially welcomed by the supernaturalist, than Professor W. James's book, *The Varieties of Religious Experience.* Professor James is a prominent member of the Society for Psychical Research, and no one is better able than he to give descriptions of

[1] Their guiltlessness is made abundantly clear in Robert Blatchford's *Not Guilty*, a book containing a lucid presentment of the case for Determinism which may be understood of all. There are copious illustrations of heredity and environment—terms the wide application of which must be thoroughly realised.

psychic phenomena; but the conclusions he comes to as to the spiritual signification of some of them will strike the normal man as too absurd to be taken seriously. More than this. Indirectly he furnishes one of the very best weapons for attacking supernaturalism that has ever yet been put in the hands of the naturalist. I have already given some examples of so-called religious experiences (in Chap. II., pp. 59–61). These are still regarded by the superstitious as spiritual manifestations; but Professor James discovers a spiritual interpretation in still more palpable hallucinations. Unwittingly he spoils the case for religious experience by trying to prove too much. I will give an instance. He describes how an intimate friend of his kept experiencing a "horrible sensation" of the presence of something, which he "did not recognise as any individual being or person." Professor James admits that "such an experience as this does not connect itself with the religious sphere." [Why not? It might have been the Devil that time.] Later on his friend had a pleasanter experience. "There was not a mere consciousness of something there, but, fused in the central happiness of it, a startling awareness of some ineffable good. Not vague either—not like the emotional effect of some poem or scent or blossom or music, but the sure knowledge of the close presence of a sort of mighty person; and, after it went, the memory persisted as the one perception of reality. Everything else might be a dream, but not that." Professor James then remarks: "My friend, as it oddly happens, does not interpret these later experiences theistically, as signifying the presence of God." Why oddly? The explanation seems simple enough. It was just because his friend was not odd,

but a normal individual of modern times. Perhaps, after all, the secret lay in the well-known reply to the question, "Is life worth living?"—It all depends on the *liver*. One may also recall the words of the celebrated clerical wit who said: "They think they are pious when they are only bilious."

Professor James then relates various experiences of other persons who, unlike his friend, were positive they *had* felt "the presence of God." And he tells us: "Nothing is more common in the pages of religious biography than the way in which seasons of lively and of difficult faith are described as alternating. Probably every religious person has the recollection of particular crises in which a direct vision of the truth, a direct perception, perhaps, of a living God's existence, swept in and overwhelmed the languor of the more ordinary belief." If this sort of thing accounts for the faith of every religious person, the mystery (in these days) of the great faith of the few and the little faith of the many is completely solved. So few, relatively speaking, have this experience; so few are by nature mystics. Also it helps to explain the prevalence of supernatural belief in bygone ages. Thoughtful unbelievers have long ago come to the conclusion that some such psychical experiences largely account for religious superstitions, and now an eminent psychologist and religious apologist confirms their theories.

Professor James argues that "the neurotic temperament naturally introduces one to regions of religious truth which are hidden from the robust Philistine type of nervous system, that thanks heaven it hasn't a single morbid fibre in its composition." This kind of "robust Philistine" is, one is glad to think, a very common

type. I hope I am a fairly robust Philistine myself. The Rationalist may, or may not, be emotional, but he certainly prefers to be without morbid fibres. Why, of all the most undesirable states of mind, should morbidity assist the human being to have faith in God? Why should spirituality and strong faith be possible only for a person of nervous instability whose intellectual canon (unacknowledged no doubt) is "*Credo quia impossibile*"? Why, in the name of all that is reasonable, should spiritual experiences be the prerogative of exceptional temperaments only? Why, in all fairness, if there be any spiritual meaning in hallucinations, should not the Agnostic be at least vouchsafed the consciousness of the Devil's presence to cure him of his unbelief?

Professor James thinks "there can be no doubt that as a matter of fact a religious life, exclusively pursued, does tend to make the person exceptional and eccentric." He refers to "geniuses in the religious line," who, "like many other geniuses.....have often shown symptoms of nervous instability." "Even more perhaps," he says, "than other kinds of genius, religious leaders have been subject to abnormal psychical visitations.....often, moreover, these pathological features in their career have *helped to give them their religious authority and influence*." All this is exceedingly instructive, coming as it does from the mouth of an earnest champion of religion[1] specially suited, by his researches in psychical phenomena, to speak with authority on the psychology of religion. His belief in the interference in human life of spiritual agencies, and the whole tenour of his book, render

[1] Regarding his philosophic position, however, see Appendix.

it certain that he is not consciously bringing any arguments to bear against supernaturalism, but, on the contrary, intends to adduce new arguments in its favour.

Have we not here a satisfactory and perfectly natural explanation of the phenomena of conversion? The religionist is apt, I think, to lose sight of the fact that conversion is not confined to any one particular creed; that it cannot witness to the truth of the one and not of the other. "The mystical feeling," remarks Professor James (pp. 425–6), "of enlargement, union, and emancipation.....is capable of forming matrimonial alliances with material furnished by the most diverse philosophies and theologies, provided only they can find a place in their framework for its peculiar emotional mood." The most striking examples of conversion are those of the instantaneous kind, of which St. Paul's is held out to us as the most eminent. I have already outlined the probable explanation in St. Paul's case, and other cases may be similarly explained. The supernaturalist's interpretation of conversion cannot be considered seriously until proofs are forthcoming of an instance in which nothing was known previously of the truth alleged to have been revealed. Like Mr. Lowes Dickinson, I have never, for example, discovered a case in which a Mohammedan or a Hindoo, without having heard of Christianity, has had a revelation of Christian "truth."

Of all visions, those of the death-bed especially invite our attention, for they are looked upon by many pious persons as sure evidence in favour of the truth of their Faith. Will this argument bear analysis? We know that good men and women have had heavenly visions

during their last moments. We know also that others of equally blameless lives have been terrified at the last by the sight of some supreme horror. How can any argument be based upon the phantasms of a disordered brain? Do not these visions, too, usually take their form from the teaching with which the mind has been imbued? The Mohammedan sees a heaven peopled with houris; do we on that account accept the Koran as our guide? A dying Hindoo may have a vision of a heathen deity of questionable character, and derive comfort from it. I have myself stood by the bedside of a dying Mahratta whose ravings during the delirium of fever indicated such a vision. There are, it is true, cases where the visions of the dying may seem utterly unlike those we should expect. But the brain retains impressions of things of which the conscious memory has long ago passed away, and, if the early history of the ecstatic could be fully known, we should, as Proctor points out,[1] find nearly every circumstance of his vision explained, or at least an explanation suggested. It may be said again of death-bed visions, as of visions generally, that there has never yet been a case of a Mohammedan or a Hindoo or any other non-Christian who has had a revelation of Christian "truth."

Professor James is not the only person having the curious notion that an abnormal state of mind admits the nearer presence of God. To take a people possessing a marvellous self-control over their emotions, and, therefore, the last among whom you would expect to find such ideas, I may mention that the

[1] In his book, *Rough Ways Made Smooth*, chapter on "Bodily Illness as a Mental Stimulant."

more ignorant and superstitious among the Japanese throw themselves into hypnotic trances, and then fondly imagine that a god is present in their body, and is making use of them as a mouthpiece.[1] Again, no superstition is commoner among the ignorant natives of India, Mohammedan and Hindoo alike, than that people of unsound mind have some sort of special means of communication with God; but that educated persons, having fairly normal minds themselves, should hold such an opinion is yet another example of the hallucinations to which religious enthusiasts are liable.

The folly of attributing any spiritual significance to these experiences will be better understood if we compare them with cases where there is no religious element whatsoever. A lady, a friend of mine, is continually subject to a curious experience, which may serve to illustrate this point. I give the account of it in her own words:—

As a child I was always a bad sleeper, and got into the habit of making up stories to amuse myself when lying awake in bed. This habit continued as I grew older; but, after a time, the stories ceased to be connected in any way with myself. Years ago I began a story which has grown gradually through three generations, and there are signs of the coming of a fourth. The old house has remained as the centre of the story for years; most of the characters are men, and no one of either sex bears any possible relationship to me. They have all become far more real to me than my own relations; at bed-time, on long railway journeys (sometimes), or when I am walking or doing needlework, they are there. If I get to the house at bed-time, I sleep well. If I am there when travelling, I don't get tired, and the characters grow and develop quite naturally. It is my inner life, and, if I were given that way, it might become a series of visions. *I can quite understand men having ecstasies in which the ideals they have always before them become apparently materialised.*

[1] In *Occult Japan*, by Percival Lowell (Riverside Press), there is an interesting account of these practices.

THE PSYCHOLOGY OF PRAYER.

I cannot too strongly insist that all this is extremely instructive. It explains so many things that still have to be explained, if religion be untrue. The new science of psychology has already accounted for many abnormal phenomena that were formerly considered miraculous—"faith cures,"[1] for instance. Does it not account for the effects of prayer? We know nothing of the efficacy of prayer in securing material benefits —there is no proof either way; but we do know that it has often an ethical value, and is also a means of strengthening faith. Does it necessarily follow that a Supernatural Being hears and answers the suppliant's prayers? I think not. *Suggestion*, it is now known, exercises an extraordinary influence over the subjective mind. In prayer auto-suggestion undoubtedly plays its subtle rôle.

Let me give an example of the benign results that may be effected by *suggestion* without any appeal to the supernatural. Often a moral change for the worse in a most estimable person is distinctly traceable to causes over which he or she had no control, and the physician or surgeon, having diagnosed the case, proceeds to do his best to bring about a cure. Where it is some nervous malady, mental therapeutics or psychic healing is sometimes extremely efficacious.[2]

[1] The delusions of the "Christian Scientists" in mixing up religion with psychic healing can only be attributed to their ignorance of modern psychology. Those who know better, and are making money out of it, are as shamefully imposing upon the credulity of religious folk as is the Roman Catholic Church with her shrines of healing.

[2] In the December (1904) Journal of the Society for Psychical Research a lady gives a vivid description of how she cured herself completely of certain nervous complaints by *auto-suggestion*. It is interesting to note that she says: "I did not believe in the efficacy of this treatment one bit; I just made myself do it; but I felt, most of the time, that it was extremely ridiculous." See also Appendix.

Vices and weaknesses are now looked upon by many in the light of diseases and ailments—curable, ameliorable, or incurable, as the case may be. Disease or Devil, the fact remains that medical treatment may effect a cure even where the patient's disorder has been brought on by, as we say, his own fault. Dipsomania, morphinomania, kleptomania, nymphomania, satyriasis, and various moral perversions may yield to a purely natural treatment, whether it be the method of a Milne Bramwell (by *suggestion*) or of Keeley.

When denouncing Mariolatry (in his sermon at the opening of the Church Congress, October, 1905), the Bishop of London said: "It is not revealed that the cry to any saint or to the Virgin Mary ever reaches them at all." Apparently, therefore, the Bishop admits that appeals to the supernatural may be wasted, and this in spite of the suppliant being very much in earnest. Yet who would be prepared to say that the Roman Catholic who prays to the Virgin Mary and to innumerable saints does not derive quite as much benefit from the process as the Protestant who directs his worship solely to the Holy Trinity, or the Shintoist who invokes the benign spirits of his ancestors?[1] The effect of the suggestion is the same in each case, and has all the appearance of an answer to prayer.

Again, putting aside abnormal phases of the mind, is it not, as Ralph Waldo Trine puts it (in his little book, *Character Building: Thought Power*), a simple

[1] The following is from the Mikado's Rescript issued on the conclusion of peace:—"The result is due in a large measure to the benign spirits of our ancestors, as well as to the devotion and duty of our civil and military officials and the self-denying patriotism of all our people.....We are happy to invoke the blessing of the benign spirits of our ancestors." N.B.—The word "God" is conspicuous by its absence; "ancestors' spirits" take its place.

psychological law that any type of thought, if entertained for a sufficient length of time, will, by and by, reach the motor tracts of the brain, and finally burst forth into action? There seems no need for the introduction of a supernatural hypothesis to explain the moral effect of prayer. So, also, with regard to faith, it is only natural that the believer, racked with doubt, should find reassurance in prayer.

The Theist who lays store by the evidence from "religious experience" will do well to ponder over the following words of one of Professor James's critics: "Instead of producing anything that would strengthen the belief in extra-human spirit agents *influencing human destinies*, psychology has made intelligible, conformably to the rest of our organised knowledge, most, if not all, of the striking phenomena which have been the empirical props of the popular faith in spiritism, whether Christian or not. We refer to anæsthesias, analgesias, hallucinations, monitions, trances, the sense of illumination in ecstasy, etc., including the facts considered in Professor James' lectures. In making this statement, I do not forget the work of the Society for Psychical Research. Its achievements may be declared to have been so far, and without prejudice of the future, absolutely inconclusive with regard to spiritism."[1] In other words, psychical research, if conducted by the experimental method and without bias, may be pregnant with consequences hardly in accord with the hopes of either the spiritist or spiritualist (in its religious sense). For, should abnormal phenomena of all kinds

[1] *International Journal of Ethics*, April, 1904, p. 338, art. "Professor William James's Interpretation of Religious Experience," by James H. Leuba.

admit of a natural explanation, their present obscurity will no longer furnish grounds for supernatural speculation.

### THE RELIGIOUS (?) EXPERIENCES OF INTOXICATION.

According to Professor James's theory, it is the person who chances to have a well-developed subliminal life who is predestined to be saved, for then God will be able to reach him. As Professor James informs us that "nitrous oxide and ether, especially nitrous oxide, when sufficiently diluted with air, stimulate the mystical consciousness in an extraordinary degree," so that "depth beyond depth of truth seems revealed to the inhaler," the unbelieving Philistine ought to be recommended to inhale this truth-revealing, and therefore faith-producing, gas. Like music, it must be meant as an aid to worship. The new beatitude will then be, as Mr. Leuba remarks, "Blessed are the intoxicated, for to them the kingdom of spirits is revealed!" I can quite understand the interest aroused by Professor James's remarkable book; but that Theists and would-be Theists should take its chief conclusion seriously is beyond me—or, rather, I should say it is one more proof to me that the inherited capacity for superstition is still strong within us. We can understand why supernatural beliefs die hard.

### MUSIC AND THE EMOTIONS.[1]

Are our emotions reliable guides, or are they not? Though the motive-power in our nature, though they

[1] An instructive treatise on this subject will be found in Vol. II., ch. x., of *Weismann on Heredity*. (Clarendon Press Series.)

go to make up that heart upon which Mr. Fielding so eloquently discourses in his *Hearts of Men*, do they not need to be carefully controlled by reason? Are they not the very same emotions which, in all but religious matters, are admittedly a fruitful source of self-deception? Take the emotion excited by music. I know many good people who think they possess considerable religious feeling, and have had a religious experience, because they are peculiarly affected by music, and especially by fine sacred music.[1] Similarly, Dr. Torrey's "Glory Song" appeals to the untrained ear of his emotional audiences, and the Salvation band, all out of tune, elevates the soul of the Salvationist. Yet lower down the scale of musical culture we find a clash of discordant sounds exciting the religious emotions of the savage. Is it too much to say that these "experiences" differ only in degree from those of the dog who howls as certain notes affect him? Granted that music, suited to the taste of the worshipper, is an aid to worship, we have to remember that there are those whose temperaments are so constituted that they are more or less unaffected by music —good, bad, or indifferent—and, if the religious feeling evoked be from God, may we not ask in all reverence: "Why should the unmusical be debarred from this means of feeling His presence? Why should the man without a note of music in his composition have this much less chance of eternal salvation?" Surely we are not to take seriously and literally the words of

[1] Do you know a hymn tune by Lord Crofton, set to the words, "Bless'd are the pure in heart"? When I first heard that tune played I shook with emotion. *I did not know at that time the words that the tune had been set to;* so it could only have been the music that affected me. At one time I confess that I myself used to mistake this hysterical element in my nature for religious fervour.

our great philosopher-poet when he says: "Let no such man be trusted"?

### SEXUAL LOVE.

Again, there is the religious feeling evoked by that strongest emotion of all—sexual love; the one excites the other, and the effect produced may be beneficial or may be mischievous. But sexual love appears to me a strange aid to the worship of *God;* and persons who really imagine they are nearer Him when in this state of emotion most certainly deceive themselves. The ascetic who is debarred from this particular "religious" experience should agree with me.

### REVIVALISM.

An examination of religious experiences, however brief, cannot well omit all mention of the question of revivalism. Has it an ethical value? Has it a spiritual meaning? To the latter question the answer of the Church is for the most part in the affirmative. In his Pentecostal message for Whitsuntide, 1905, the Archbishop of Canterbury refers, without directly naming them, to the extraordinary movement of which the young Evan Roberts has been the leader, and to the preaching of Messrs. Torrey and Alexander in London. "To whatever cause or combination of causes we may attribute it," he says, "the fact appears to be certain that expression has this year been given in an unusual degree to a desire for increased spiritual earnestness in the Christian life." I shall not embark upon the question of the spiritual signification of revivalism. My remarks on other religious experiences may be taken to apply here also. Regarding its ethical value, I fancy most thoughtful

onlookers will be with me when I say that it is unadvisable to stir up hysteria in hysterical people just for the sake of effects, the usefulness of which is extremely problematical—effects which, if they benefit a few, are harmful to the majority, and, in any case, are unlikely to be of a permanent nature. We have it on excellent authority that "emotional appeals and revivals do not destroy carnal sin in schools, and it is well known how often they seem to stimulate, to increase, immorality."[1]

## § 6. *The Inevitable Conclusion.*

A candid and unbiassed examination of the so-called theistic proofs can but lead to the one conclusion: they are worthless. Even if the cosmological and teleological arguments were satisfactory, and even if "religious" experiences proved the existence of a spirit world, the ethical argument undoubtedly breaks down, carrying along with it all that fragile structure of which the theist's theories are composed. Yes, the problem of evil is insoluble. "We have not," says John Stuart Mill,[2] "to attempt the impossible problem of reconciling infinite benevolence and justice with infinite power in the Creator of such a world as this. To attempt to do so not only involves absolute contradiction in an intellectual point of view, but exhibits to excess the revolting spectacle of a Jesuitical defence of moral enormities." The latest defence by an approved apologist of the Church of England will be found in

[1] The Ven. Archdeacon J. M. Wilson, D.D., late headmaster of Clifton College—in the *Journal of Education*, 1881.

[2] In *Three Essays on Religion*, p. 80 of the Cheap Reprint issued for the Rationalist Press Association.

chap. xiv. of *Pro Fide*. It has been conducted with conspicuous candour, and such harsh terms as "Jesuitical" and "revolting" are no longer applicable. Whether, however, this is likely to prove any more successful than previous attempts, and to serve as an antidote to scepticism, may be seen by a glance at the following summary of the line of argument. The author relies, to begin with, upon the theological assumption that moral evil arises from the abuse of God's gift to man of a free will. He also argues that the transmission of a tendency to sin is not unjust, because a remedy for it has been provided. As for physical evil, this, he maintains, subserves important moral purposes in the case of man, and in the case of animals it is more than compensated for by physical good. In the end, however, he is forced, as we have seen, to fall back upon the hypothesis of a personal devil. In other words, he presents us with those sophistical arguments of theistic apologists which we have been investigating, and then, finding, as a perfectly honest mind must find, that these are inadequate, he has, after all, to rely upon those ancient theological dogmas which owe their origin to the insolubility of the problem. Let those accept his special pleading who can. There are many who read an apologetic work with minds already made up to be persuaded by it, and where there is this bias there cannot be straight thinking. For those who keep an open mind the conclusion is inevitable: apart from the revelation which has been called in question there is no proof, there never can be any proof, of the existence of the God of the Christian. If there be a First Cause, if there be a Supreme Intelligence, if there be a Deity at all, we know nothing of

His nature and nothing of His intentions with regard to us.

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## NOTE ON RELIGION AND PHILOSOPHY.

An examination of the development of philosophy leads to conclusions of considerable import. Our present inquiry can be only an exceedingly rapid one; but anyone wishing to study the subject a little more fully will find it concisely treated in a book called *Science and Faith*, by Dr. Paul Topinard, late General Secretary of the Anthropological Society of Paris. From Chapter VIII. I cull the following:—

"Animals, in the presence of phenomena which they do not understand, retire confounded. Savage man does the same. But he, at least, hazards the attempt of an explanation by investing the objects or phenomena in question with life and sentiments similar to his own. Later this same savage, discovering or believing to discover in himself a double being, the one corporeal and the other spiritual, transfers the new notions regarding himself to objects without himself, to stones, plants, animals, or stars..... Religions, at first more or less elementary, with their founders and priests, do not appear until later.....For a long time the sorcerer—that is to say, a man less credulous than the rest, and adroit in the sense of knowing how to reap personal advantage from the beliefs of his fellows—stood alone in his class. Sorcerer and medicine man at once, he distributed amulets, drove out spirits from the bodies of the deceased, and caused the rains to fall.....The sacerdotal caste arose, at times recruiting itself from the outside and at times hereditary. More intelligent than the others, more disposed to reflect, the priests were naturally inclined to seek more satisfactory explanations from the phenomena of nature, to distinguish general causes from particular causes, to reduce the number

of the spirits, to champion the most important of these, and even to symbolise many of them. The cult of heroes, of personages in the tribe who had rendered it valuable services, and of ancestors, was mingled with the preceding beliefs. Having to speak to simple people, for whom it was necessary to materialise things, they were obliged to recast their ideas and to expound them by the help of fables and myths, which soon essayed to explain in a tangible form the origin of things, the existing phenomena of nature, and often to guide the conduct of men. These were the first attempts of philosophy, already as utilitarian as they were mystical."

"Religions consecrated a multitude of usages and ceremonies from which the sacerdotal class lived, and which greatly augmented its power; and they also exerted a strong political influence. Again, they led up to genuine moral codes, such as those of Brahma and Buddha in India, and Confucius in China.....The utilitarian idea appears to have dominated among the Phœnician and Canaanite peoples. It gave rise to the doctrine of a personal national God, who had created man and the people whom he had chosen and whose destinies he directed. He exacted from them blind and exclusive worship and obedience to the laws which he promulgated. In return he protected them, reserving his right of terrestrial punishment.....The Egyptians are related to the Hindus by their belief in metempsychosis, or the transmigration of souls from animal to animal.....The conception of a judgment after death passed through these peoples [the Egyptians] to the polytheism of Greece and Rome.....Greek philosophy rose audaciously to the loftiest and boldest conceptions, not conceptions crowning an intellectual edifice, but conceptions which dominate it in imaginary realms of space. Aristotle belongs apart. He is at once scientist and philosopher. He observes nature. He is the founder of natural history, of anthropology, of political science, and of political economy. According to Graef, he is also the founder of political philosophy, because he was the first to introduce positive *facts* into philosophy.....In the general run, they [the Greek philosophers] were dialecticians, sophists, and intellectual gymnasts only. But, such as they were, they founded free inquiry, disintegrated

the national polytheistic beliefs, and prepared the way for the revolution which was on the verge of accomplishment."

"In an unknown [?] corner of Judæa, on the banks of a lake, the glad tidings burst forth of a coming regeneration, and a voice was heard pleading the cause of the feeble, the humble, and the oppressed, and saying: 'Love ye one another!' The doctrine, at first local and inculcated by a small number of apostles, soon extended with St. Paul to the Gentiles, and thenceforward its progress was rapid [?]. Philosophy was not indifferent to it..... Christianity, in effect, instead of conquering the pagan world, was conquered by it, as Huxley has remarked..... During the Middle Ages science had disappeared from the West. Philosophy, hemmed in between metaphysics and theology, became scholasticism, which sought to reconcile Plato, Plotinus, and Aristotle with the needs of orthodoxy, and split hairs over subtle essences and entities.....Then a concourse of circumstances occurred which, as fifteen centuries before, was to transform the Western world, although differently, and which inaugurated modern times, to wit: The return to the West of the knowledge that had taken refuge among the Arabs; the discovery of printing, which spread everywhere trustworthy texts; the discovery of the New World, which quadrupled the surface of the earth to be observed and studied; the awakening of science, with Copernicus, Galileo, Kepler, Rondelet, Vesalius, Harvey; and, finally, the Reformation."

"On the downfall of scholasticism the first care of philosophy was not the renouncing of what had been its essence, the search for the absolute by *intuition* [italics are mine] and reason, but the overhauling of its methods, which it sought to render more precise.....The subsequent divergencies were rooted less in the varying intellectual and logical make-up of each philosopher and in their method of applying their faculties than in their individual ways of feeling and conceiving. Philosophy in effect is simply a struggle between these elements.....Nevertheless, the conquests of science began to make themselves felt. There was now less insistence on God and more on the world, man, morals, and the conditions of social life. The overhanging metaphysical cloud is still more or less heavy, but at spots it suffers the light to pass through. There are

two streams: the one continues Descartes—in France with Pascal, Bossuet, Fénélon, and Malebranche, in Germany with Spinoza and Leibnitz; the other, in England, is represented by Bacon, Hobbes, and Locke.....Bacon, Hobbes, and Locke are the inaugurators of a school which is characterised by its practical spirit, its observation and analysis of psychological facts, and by its disposition to refer the conduct of man to the advantages which he draws therefrom. It led to Adam Smith, who discovers the sanction of morality in the public approbation of what is right; to Bentham, who sees it in interest rationally understood; to Hume and the Scottish school; and finally to the existing school of John Stuart Mill, Darwin, and Herbert Spencer. Locke, on the other hand, is also the starting-point of the French school of the eighteenth century, which is characterised by a tendency at once anti-clerical, altruistic, and sentimental."

"We shall say nothing of the philosophy of the nineteenth century of the German school, which represents speculative philosophy, and the English, which is physiological in bent, and of which we have the highest opinion. In France the most notable achievement is the attempt which was made by Auguste Comte. For Comte metaphysics must be entirely eliminated. The day of intuitions, *à priori* conceptions, entities, innate ideas, is past. If a problem cannot be solved, it is to be let alone. Psychology is only a branch of physiology, and the latter a division of biology. Morals rest not upon any imperative obligation, but upon the altruism which education developes. There are no rights besides those which society confers. *Human knowledge has passed through three stages: one of faith or theology, one of conceptions or metaphysics, and one of observation or science.* These, in turn, are the basal principles of science, and would be perfect if the positivist school were faithful to them. But in its own bosom even there are refractory spirits who suffer themselves unconsciously to be ruled by their sentiments rather than by observation, and who are constantly lapsing back into the old methods.....For me there is but one method of knowing what is, and of inducing therefrom what has been and what will be—and that is observation; all suggestions which transgress this method are void."

From his examination of the evolution of philosophy Dr. Topinard draws, by way of *résumé*, the following conclusions:—

*a*. Philosophy, like religion, is the outcome of the belief in the supernatural held by man in his more or less primitive state.

*b*. The philosophic spirit and the spirit which created the arts and letters have as common characters their subjectivity, their need of imagining and of constructing, and their firm belief in the reality of their conceptions.

*c*. Philosophy is opposed to science. It answers to the impatient need of man to explain at once things which elude his comprehension.

*d*. At the present day philosophy still lives, but is losing its initial character and sees itself obliged more and more to reckon with science and practice.

*e*. We are obliged to admit that the group of human faculties which has given birth to philosophy has a less prolonged future than the group which has given rise to science.

*f*. Philosophy, although on the wane, and apparently in disaccord with the end of the nineteenth century, has nevertheless a beautiful domain to exploit.

These conclusions concerning the past and present of philosophy cannot be disseminated too widely. So many refuse point-blank to inquire into their belief, because they have been led to think that this will entail their wading through a mass of philosophical writings, and because they expect to find these either incomprehensible or unconvincing. Properly speaking, Christians should be the first to admit that apologists who attempt to defend their Faith by abstruse arguments are sadly inconsistent. For it is written, Jesus rejoiced in spirit, and said, I thank thee, O Father, Lord of heaven and earth, that thou hast hid these things from the wise and prudent, and hast revealed them unto babes. Let the humble truth-seeker take heart. Whatever the value or present tendency of philosophy may or may not be, the truth about the Christian religion can be ascertained without a knowledge of metaphysics.

Metaphysics does not, and never will, appeal to the average man. He agrees with the scoffer, who says: "When

the man who is speaking no longer knows what he is talking about, and the man who is listening never knew what he was talking about, that is metaphysics!" The obscurity inherent in profound and abstract philosophy may well be objected to, not only as painful and fatiguing, but as the inevitable source of uncertainty and error. "Here, indeed," exclaims Hume, in his essay on *The Different Species of Philosophy*, "lies the justest and most plausible objection against a considerable part of metaphysics, that they are not properly a science, but arise either from the fruitless efforts of human vanity, which would penetrate into subjects utterly inaccessible to the understanding, or from the craft of popular superstitions, which, being unable to defend themselves on fair ground, raise these intangling brambles to cover and protect their weakness." It is accurate and just reasoning like that of Hume, in his *Inquiry Concerning Human Understanding*, which, to quote his words again, "is the only catholic remedy, fitted for all persons and all dispositions; and is alone able to subvert that abstruse philosophy and metaphysical jargon which, being mixed up with popular superstition, renders it in a manner impenetrable to careless reasoners, and gives it the air of science and wisdom."

It may be urged that the famous Scottish philosopher and historian has been unduly severe in his sceptical views concerning speculative philosophy, or that he would have been less severe upon the later metaphysical thinking which was affected by his criticisms. There still remains, in any case, one feature common to all philosophies: their difficulty. Philosophy is only studied, and, indeed, can only be thoroughly understood, by the few. Take, for example, that intellectual phenomenon, Hegelianism, the spirit and method of which have leavened the whole mass of philosophical thought in Germany. It is confessedly one of the most difficult of all philosophies. One has heard what Hegel himself is supposed to have said: "Only one man ever understood me, and even he couldn't." This difficulty of comprehension has an important bearing on the argument for Agnosticism. Granting that there is such a God as Hegel would have us accept, how can anyone suppose for a moment that a Deity wrapping Himself up in such obscurity would be unreasonable enough to expect all man-

kind to believe in Him? He must not only pardon, but approve of, Agnosticism. A God, whose existence can only be proved, if it can be proved at all, by the abstruse arguments of a Hegel, is not a God anxious to reveal Himself to His creatures.

## Chapter VII.

## FALLACIES IN POPULAR ARGUMENTS

### § 1. *Preliminary Remarks. The Power of Christianity for Good.*

Finally we have to consider some arguments that have often quite as much weight with the believer as Bible apologetics or Theistic proofs. They are: (1) The power of Christianity for good; (2) the marvellous spread of Christianity; (3) the witness of the Christian martyrs; and (4) the universality of the religious instinct. The first of these—the power of Christianity for good—opens up a large question, and I have thought it advisable, therefore, to select for special investigation two popular beliefs springing from this source—namely, the belief that woman owes her present position to Christianity, and the belief that the overthrow of Christianity would endanger society and the nation. The point now under consideration is not whether Christianity *ought* to have been, but whether it *has* been, a power for good. Although the apologist, when hard pressed as to this or that evidence of failure, attributes it to the fault of man, he nevertheless continues stoutly to maintain that Christianity has indeed worked wonders for mankind. This we should certainly expect of it, if it be a true belief, and it is a claim therefore which cannot be too closely investigated.

It would be a comparatively easy, though lengthy, task to make out an exceedingly strong case against Christianity by enlarging upon the inhumanity and immorality of the Dark Ages, and comparing this with the far more humane and moral conduct of men in pre-Christian civilisations. One could point to the rock-graven edicts of King Asoka (263–226 B.C.), and show that in the matter of discountenancing slavery, of humanity to prisoners, of denouncing war, of founding hospitals, of abolishing blood sacrifices, of inculcating religious toleration, and of teaching purity of life, all that is now so complacently claimed for Christianity was anticipated. Or again, one might dwell on the dark side of Christendom, even in this year of grace 1907, and draw some very odious comparisons, especially as we have so recently been presented with the object-lesson of a heathen race which excels many, and equals any, of the Christian races in nearly all those virtues we prize and call Christian. But I have no intention of embarking upon such a wide sea of controversy.

One controversial subject, however, I feel bound to notice, because the disputed point is at the root of the whole matter. We are so accustomed to hear every humane or unselfish deed, and every moral act, described as Christian that "good" and "Christian" have almost become synonymous terms. It never occurs to us to ask, or we never give a second thought to the question, how much the humane principles now accepted among civilised nations may be due to education, experience, and evolution, and how much to Christian influence. The Rationalist attributes the improvement chiefly to the former, and, in any case, to the working of natural forces; the Christian chiefly

to the latter, and, in any case, to the working of supernatural forces.

All that is beneficial in civilisation, both on its material and on what is called its spiritual side, is placed by the Christian to the credit of Christianity, and the hand of God is traced with becoming reverence in every discovery which ameliorates our lot. This, although the promoters and discoverers are often non-Christians, and although it is well known that it is the Church that has chiefly delayed the advance of science. Whatever may be the case now, the education of the masses never concerned her in olden times. Rather her concern was then that the people should not be educated, much as it is in Russia at the present time. Such education as she did encourage was of the type imparted in the Mohammedan University at Cairo to-day—the three R's and the Koran—and for similar reasons. As late as 1846 Cobden writes to a friend on the subject of national education: "I took the repeal of the Corn Laws as light amusement compared with the difficult task of inducing the priests of all denominations to agree to suffer the people to be educated." Again, Lord Macaulay, speaking of the Roman Catholic Church, in the first chapter of his *History of England*, says that "during the last three centuries to stunt the growth of the human mind has been her chief object. Throughout Christendom, whatever advance has been made in knowledge, in freedom, in wealth, and in the arts of life, has been made in spite of her, and has everywhere been in inverse proportion to her power. The loveliest and most fertile provinces of Europe have, under her rule, been sunk in poverty, in political servitude, and in intellectual torpor."

So long as organisms are adapted to their environment, neither progressive nor retrogressive development will occur. Because, after the Dark Ages, Europe progressed while Asia stagnated and Africa retrogressed, is modern civilisation to be placed to the credit of the Christian religion? As rationally might any one of the ancient civilisations be credited to the popular superstition of the country then in the van of progress. To such absurd lengths are these pretensions carried that we find persons ignorant enough and fanatical enough to attribute the present predominance of Christian nations to their religion. For a reply to such I cannot better that given by a learned Buddhist monk to a missionary who had told him that nations of the West had become powerful because of their Christianity. "The fact is," retorted the monk, "that nations have become powerful in the degree to which they have rejected the precepts of Christianity, in the extent to which they have substituted for the Christian maxim of 'Love thy neighbour as thyself' that other maxim which shoots 300 bullets a minute."

Returning to the only contention really worth considering, let us assume that there has been moral progress in Christendom, and let us assume also that this has nothing to do with the advance of Humanitarianism in the present, or with pre-Christian (Buddhist, for instance) teaching in the past. Are we to conclude that this is a proof of the divine origin of Christianity? I must confess I fail to see how any improvement which there may be in the matter of coarse vice among the proletariat, of dishonesty among the commercial classes, of corruptness among the professional, and of sensuality among the leisured classes, can be any proof that Jesus, one of the

world's reformers, was God Incarnate. Christian teaching embodies precepts of the greatest ethical value, borrowed, as we now know, from the doctrines of ancient moralists and religious teachers. Would it not indeed be strange if this teaching had done no good whatever —if the leaven had had no elevating influences at all, whereas the teachings of Confucius and Buddha have produced those admirable results which even Christians are at last prepared to admit? Dr. Warschauer explains in *Anti-Nunquam*, p. 72, that Agnostics are good men, "because, willingly or unwillingly, they have taken in Christian ideas through every pore." How, then, does he explain the virtues of the Japanese?

Let us now leave generalisation, and investigate in some detail an important Christian argument which has the contention of Christianity's power for good as its source. It forms a striking illustration of the way fallacies may arise from a hard-and-fast adhesion to convictions that are justified rather by the heart than by history.

## § 2. *Christianity Woman's Best Friend.*[1]

The majority of women still remain true believers. There appear to be numerous reasons, psychological and educational, for their attitude. Woman is more imaginative, more emctional, and more sensitive to external *suggestion* than man. As to her education, men, even those who have no religious belief whatever, prefer to keep her in ignorance of their views, partly under a vague notion that unbelief would undermine her virtue and lessen her amiability, and partly because

[1] As remarked by the Bishop of London in a sermon at Westminster Abbey. See cover of Mr. Guy Thorne's book, *When it was Dark.*

they deem her religious influence an essential element in the upbringing of their children. In addition to all this, woman is taught by the Church that Christianity is her best friend. Prominent prelates of the Church proclaim that "the Gospel has given woman the position she holds to-day."[1] Nothing could very well be more contrary to fact. One can only suppose that these expounders of the truth are speaking according to the dictates of their hearts, and without having really studied the question, or else that they believe their cause is served by deliberately closing their eyes to inconvenient facts. The question is one of supreme importance, as it is chiefly women who are now the mainstay of the Faith.

People with little or no knowledge of those portions of history that specially bear upon the question are easily deceived. The average woman's ideas concerning the pre-Christian civilisations are decidedly vague. Her ideas may also be further confused by lurid accounts from the pulpit of the licentiousness prevalent among the upper classes during the earlier and also the last years of the Roman Empire; while nothing is told her about the unrestrained licence of the aristocracy during the Middle Ages, and the degraded condition of the masses during, say, the eighteenth century, "when," says Sir Walter Besant, "for drunkenness, brutality, and ignorance, the Englishman of the baser kind reached the lowest depth ever reached by civilised man." Clerics who unconsciously mislead their congregations with this argument cannot be aware of those hard facts of history which render it untenable. For their benefit,

[1] Quoted from an address delivered by the Bishop of London at St. Paul's, as reported in the *Church Times* of October 7th, 1904.

and for the benefit of their dupes, let us glance at a few of these facts.

The status of women among the "barbarians" is vouched for by the Romans, their enemies, and therefore unexceptionable witnesses. Nothing impressed the Romans more than the equality of the sexes among the northern nations, the man's reverence for womanhood, the woman's sympathy with manhood, and the high code of morality that was the natural outcome of this well-balanced state of society.

At a time when the men of the "Chosen People" were insulting and unjust to their women, heathen women enjoyed a position which their Christian, not to mention their Mohammedan, descendants might well envy. "Polygamy only began to disappear among the Jews in the fifth century B.C., and so curious was the influence of the Old Testament on the early Christian Church that several of the Fathers could not bring themselves to condemn it, and it was not officially suppressed by the Church until A.D. 1060. Luther and the Reformers allowed it even later. Yet polygamy was one of the surest signs of a contempt of woman, and it had been rejected by Greeks, Romans, and barbarians long before the Hebrews began to perceive its enormity."[1]

"The part women played in old Japan," writes the founder of the first university for women in Japan,[2] "was very remarkable, especially *before* the arrival of Buddhism and Confucianism. Men and women were almost equal in their social position. There was then

[1] See footnote p. 37 of *The Religion of Woman*, by Joseph McCabe.

[2] Professor Jinzo Naruse. For the quotation see chap. xxi. on "The Position of Women" in Mr. Alfred Stead's recent publication, *Japan by the Japanese*.

no shadow of the barbarous idea that men were everything and women nothing. Women's power even in politics was great, and history tells us that there were nine women who ascended the throne in olden times. Women in general were not inferior to men physically, mentally, or morally. They were noted for their bravery, and distinguished themselves on the field of battle. In the literary world they were not less noted for their brilliant productions. Their moral conduct was most blameless, and commanded universal respect. Their natural temperament was cheerful and optimistic, and charmed the sterner sex. Such being the attainments and characteristics of women in olden times, we can fairly believe that they were as well educated as men were, although there were not existing any institutions of instruction for women. This was the springtime of Japanese womanhood, when it blossomed undisturbed, and exerted a strong and beneficial influence on the life of old Japan. The introduction of Buddhism and Confucianism, however, began to create great changes in the position of women. And yet so powerful were women in society when these two religions came to Japan that their rapid spread in our country was due to the earnest endeavours of women." Speaking of the feudal age, he remarks: "The social environment of the age and the prevalence of Buddhism and Confucianism worked hand in hand to bring about the subjection of women." The analogy between the experiences of the Japanese lady and her European sister is a striking one. (There is an analogy, too, between the conduct of the Buddhist priests and that of the Roman Catholic priests in the Middle Ages, or even in Southern Italy to-day. "The sins of the present generation of

priests," said Count Okuma in the course of an interview, "are many, and the hells about which they preach are prepared for the like of them."[1] "The majority of the priests are utterly degenerate and hopelessly ignorant."[2])

Look on these pictures, one of 2000 B.C. and the other of A.D. 1850 :—

*Picture I.*—Two thousand years before the Christian era "woman was more free and more honoured in Egypt than she is in any country of the world to-day. She was the mistress of the house.[3].....She inherited equally with her brothers, and had full control of her property. She could go where she liked, or speak with whom she liked. She was 'juridically the equal of man,' says M. Paturet, 'having the same rights and being treated in the same fashion'; and the same authority observes that it was not as mother, but as woman, as a being equal in dignity, that she was thus honoured. There was polygamy in theory, but the first wife was generally able to exact conditions in her marriage contract which effectually prevented it. The inscriptions show, says Maspéro, that she remained to the end of her life 'the beloved of her husband and the mistress of the house.'"[4]

*Picture II.*—In enlightened Boston, about 1850 (under the English Common Law), woman could not hold any property, either inherited or earned. A woman, either married or unmarried, could hold no office

[1] See p. 31 of the Rev. Herbert Moore's *The Christian Faith in Japan.*

[2] *Ibid*, p. 129.

[3] We learn this from reliable sources—for example, from W. M. Flinders Petrie and Gaston Camille Charles Maspéro, the celebrated English and French Egyptologists.

[4] *The Religion of Woman.*

of trust or power. She was not recognised as a citizen. The status of a married woman was little better than that of a domestic servant. By the English Common Law her husband was her lord and master. He had the sole custody of her person, and of her children while minors. He could punish her "with a stick no thicker than his thumb," and she could not complain against him. He was the owner of all her real estate and of her earnings. She had no personal rights, and could hardly call her soul her own. Her husband could steal her children, rob her of her clothing, neglect to support the family :-she had no legal redress.[1]

Not until near the middle of the nineteenth century did that movement commence which has radically improved, and will continue to improve, the position of women. And who took the chief, and, in the initial stage, the only, part in this reform movement? *Freethinkers.* Who were silent when they were not active opponents? *The clergy.* "It was just those who most radically abandoned Christianity—Owen, Holyoake, and Mill—that were the most logical and ungrudging in their plea for woman. It was the Mary Wollstonecrafts, Harriet Martineaus, Frances Wrights, George Eliots, Helen Taylors, and Annie Besants that distinguished themselves by fearlessness and unselfishness..... The clergy never discovered any injustice to woman; and only one in a thousand could see it when it was pointed out.....All honour to the memory of those clergymen who, like Kingsley and Farrar, protested against the injustice to the full extent of their idea of

[1] These remarks are quoted on p. 15 of *The Religion of Woman* from vol. iii., p. 290, of Mrs. Cady Stanton's *History of Women's Suffrage.*

womanhood.....On the Continent there has been the same story of general clerical opposition and general heterodox support."[1] "Mr. Pinchwife,"[2] too, has undoubtedly had a hand in the subjection of woman; but we are investigating the grounds for the contention that Christianity has laid on woman a burden of gratitude, and that, if Christianity were overthrown, women would sink into unknown depths of degradation. Do the above-stated facts bear out that contention?

The question arises: Why has Christianity stood in the way of woman's cause? The answer is simple enough: Christianity, in adopting the Old Testament, adopted with it the Hebrew conception of woman. Her inferiority to man was established by her origin from his *rib* and the leading part she took in his *fall*. The Vicar of Crantock tabulates[3] the reasons why a Christian woman should cover her head in church, as follows:—

(1) Man's priority of creation. Adam was first formed, then Eve.

(2) The manner of creation. The man is not of the woman, but the woman of the man.

(3) The purport of creation. The man was not created for the woman, but the woman for the man.

(4) Results in creation. The man is the image of the Glory of God, but woman is the glory of man.

(5) Woman's priority in the Fall. Adam was not deceived; but the woman, being deceived, was in the transgression.

(6) The marriage relation. As the Church is subject to Christ, so let the wives be to their husbands.

(7) The headship of man and woman. The head of every man is Christ, but the head of the woman is man.

[1] *The Religion of Woman*, pp. 105, 107, 111.

[2] Pinchwife, it will be remembered, is the anxious husband (in Wycherley's comedy, *The Country Wife*) who held that a woman is innocent in proportion to her lack of knowledge. There are, of course, other reasons why a wife's ignorance is deemed desirable. *Cf.* "And so far will I trust thee, gentle Kate."

[3] In his sermon at St. Crantock's on August 27th, 1905.

The Jews' idea of a woman was sanctioned by no less an authority than Jehovah; nor did the Christ of the Gospels give one word of clear guidance on this or any other social problem, or enter one word of explicit protest against the injustice of the Judaic treatment of women. Again, the teaching of St. Paul was based on the Old Testament, and the teaching of the Fathers was based on the Old Testament and St. Paul. A few quotations from the sayings of some of these Fathers, whose contempt of marriage became one of the great errors of the Church, may prove instructive:—

Fornication is a lapse from one marriage into many.—*Clement of Alexandria.*

Digamists (widowers who re-marry) are saved in the name of Christ, but are by no means crowned by him.—*Origen.*

Second marriage is "a decent sort of adultery."—*Athenagoras.*

It was no part of God's primitive design that the race should be continued by sexual union. Marriage is the outcome of sin.—*St. Gregory of Nyssa* (a married bishop).

Blessed is the one who leads a celibate life, and soils not the divine image within him with the filth of concupiscence.

Fierce is the dragon, and cunning the asp;
But woman has the malice of both.
—*St. Gregory of Nazianzum.*

Why was woman created at all?—*St. Augustine.*

Thou art the devil's gate, the betrayer of the tree, the first deserter of the divine law!

Marriage is not far removed from fornication.—*Tertullian.*

She is more fitted for bodily work.....Remember that God took a rib out of Adam's body, not a part of his soul, to make her.

She was not made to the image of God, like man.—*St. Ambrose.*

Woman is the root of all evil.—*St. Jerome.*

At the Council of Auxerre, in 578, the bishops forbade women, on account of their "impurity," to take the sacrament in their hands as men did.

If women only knew of these sayings, would they approve of the "appeal to the first six centuries"?

Bad as the position of woman was under the

influence of the early Church teaching, it was, in many respects, still worse during the Middle Ages. "Life-long seclusion in the inner apartments of the house of a man she has not chosen, or internment in a nunnery—that is, either degraded or unnatural—is the choice (within limits) of the daughter of the wealthy. Life-long drudgery, with few and coarse pleasures, with a long vista of sticks and whips, and scold's bridles, and ducking stools—with, perhaps, the brutal 'ordeal' on the slightest suspicion, or the ghastly death of the witch, is the prospect of the daughter of the poor."[1] Even the Reformation altered more than it improved the condition of woman. How could it be otherwise when the Reformers were nothing if not Bibliolaters?

Of the movement for the betterment of woman's position that eventually took place, not by the aid, but in spite, of the Church, I have already spoken. All the evidence we possess regarding the history of Heathendom and Christendom conclusively shows that Christianity has done much to lower, and but little to elevate, the position of women. Should I have succeeded in arousing the interest of my gentle readers, or should they wish to verify my statements, I implore them to read well-known works of competent authorities on this subject. The astounding but apparently prevalent idea, that woman is only secured by Christianity from the brutal assaults of man, will appear in the next argument we are about to consider.

[1] *The Religion of Woman*, p. 78. This work embodies a complete refutation of the assertion which we have cursorily examined. The truth-seeker desirous of studying other aspects of the Christian contention is strongly recommended to peruse also Mr. McCabe's brilliant essay, *The Bible in Europe* (Watts, 1907).

## § 3. *The Overthrow of Christianity would Endanger Society and the Nation.*

I have elsewhere commented on the opinion prevalent in England (and in some other, but not all other, Christian countries) that, to quote Canon Henson, "the real elements of the Christian Faith are those that have made European nations the most powerful in the world,"[1] and that the overthrow of Christianity would endanger the nation. Many go still farther, and prophesy absolute chaos. People who have been imbued with the Church's teaching, and who have spent their lives in Christian surroundings, are naturally convinced that belief and morality are indissoluble partners—that Christianity is a power for good in this respect above all others. Therefore, when Professor Flint says, "It [the Christian Faith] could not be displaced without shaking society from top to bottom,"[2] he expresses a very popular opinion among believers and semi-believers. Even among Agnostics there are many who, while recognising the fallacy so far as they themselves are concerned, still seem to consider that society would be insufficiently protected from criminals by its own instinct of self-preservation, and that, to maintain order among the masses, the hand of the law must, for the present, be strengthened by appeals to a supernatural sanction of conduct. Both Herbert Spencer and Matthew Arnold, for example, thought the world at large stood in peril of a moral collapse, while, as the latter puts it, "the old (theologically-derived) sanction of conduct is

[1] See his *Notes on Popular Rationalism.*
[2] *Anti-Theistic Theories*, Lecture 5, on Comte's Positivist Philosophy.

out of date, and the new is not yet born." "Few things can happen more disastrous," writes Herbert Spencer, "than the decay and death of a regulative system no longer fit, before another and fitter regulative system has grown up to replace it" (see Preface, dated July, 1879, to *The Data of Ethics*). It is for reasons such as these that so many Agnostics still lend their moral support to the Churches; for men rightly uphold what they deem essential to the common weal, whether it be Christ-worship in England or ancestor-worship in Japan.

This deeply-rooted conviction regarding belief and conduct has been partially considered in the first section of this chapter, and, the subject being one of the greatest importance, I am also devoting to its consideration a portion of the concluding chapter of this book. I shall confine myself here to the warning given to us by the Church and the pious laity—that we must expect nothing less than chaos should the Resurrection, and along with it, of course, the whole fabric of Christianity, be ultimately disproved.

This view has been illustrated in Mr. Guy Thorne's book, *When it was Dark*. The book may be seen on every bookstall, has had an extraordinary sale,[1] and has been much appreciated by many pious-minded persons (especially by those of the High Church persuasion, the book being written by a partisan of that cult). The anti-Christian propagandist is here represented as *knowing* that Christ is God; but, for some unexplained and exceedingly mysterious reason, utilising a huge fortune and a powerful intellect in unscrupulous endeavours to spread disbelief. He is a

[1] Approximately 300,000 copies by the end of January, 1907.

deceiver of mankind, a genuine Satan in human shape. He leads the life of an ascetic, so the usual grounds given for disbelief are removed. With the assistance of another man (a real villain, this time, of the lowest type), *one of the greatest savants of the day*, a gigantic fraud is perpetrated, and the Resurrection thereby definitely disproved. Immediately an epidemic of crime breaks out among *quondam* Christians, which nothing can quell. The restraints of order are paralysed, and the criminal element is rampant. The violence and viciousness of *men* were, please to note, specially directed against the weaker sex, who had to keep at home and bar the door. Not only Agnostics, but any who happened to differ in their views from this champion of Christianity, come in for a share of Mr. Thorne's invective. The wonder is how an author of his ability could be capable of penning such an effusion; and that it can be read and appreciated, as it undoubtedly has been by many excellent persons of his way of thinking, only shows how easily bias may cloud the intellect. It requires an effort, too, to understand how this book can appeal to one of the chief dignitaries of the Church; but there, conspicuously printed on the cover, we are treated to an extract from his sermon in praise of the book.

I submit that there is not a Rationalist in the world, however militant, who would descend to forgery to promote his cause. He would not hold the *pious* opinion that the end justifies the means. On the contrary, the curtain has but now fallen upon a scene where a Christian Church ranged herself on the side of forgers while freethinkers like Zola and Clémenceau fought the battle of truth.

According to Mr. Guy Thorne and the admirers of

his book, the Christian races are innately far worse than Jews, Turks, infidels, and heretics—far worse, indeed, than savages and animals—for they are only held in check from the commission of the vilest excesses by their belief in the Resurrection. Chaos and crime are rife in certain cities in Russia and Poland to-day. What is the cause? Unbelief? Is it not rather the result of the cruel laws and despicable methods of a Christian government, aided by Christian butchers, calling themselves soldiers, and by a Christian hooligan element such as it would be hard to find outside a Christian city? This chaos occurs, mind you, under a powerful Christian theocratic government; and the head of the Holy Synod, Pobiedonostseff, was, before his removal, one of the prime movers. The terrible atrocities of which the unfortunate Jews have been the victims were undoubtedly connived at by the authorities, and inhuman crimes have been perpetrated by Christians that would be impossible in humane Japan. The policy of keeping the masses steeped in the grossest superstitions of the orthodox Church is now bearing fruit, adding to the chaos and bloodshed and hindering the work of reform. It is belief, not unbelief, that has played a leading part in creating this chaos, and in stirring up man's cruellest passions.

As to the safety of women (in the event of the Resurrection being discredited), where in civilised Christendom, may I ask, could a lady be left for days and nights alone in a tent or open house? She *can* be, in the Indian jungle or in the Australian bush. For such protection as may there be necessary (and the open house testifies how little it is required) she relies upon her heathen servants. Almost the only danger in

India is from religious fanatics, and in Australia from Christian criminals. In what Christian country would it be safe to have paper windows and walls, as in Japan? My wife and I slept in strange, out-of-the-way native hotels in Japan in perfect security, though a would-be criminal had only to tear through a thin piece of paper! Belief in the Resurrection is rapidly decaying in France to-day. Are cases of assault on women any the more prevalent on that account? If belief in the Resurrection is so essential, how comes it that we have allied ourselves to a heathen nation, and made friends with another that is fast giving up this belief? How comes it that in our own Government two of the most responsible posts are now occupied by declared Agnostics?

## § 4. *The Spread of Christianity a Proof of its Truth.*

"What, then," asks the Rev. Prebendary W. A. Whitworth,[1] "was the original gospel of power which overran the world with such astonishing success?" The spread of Christianity is thought by nearly all good Christians to have been marvellous. Was it? That is the question we have next to consider. In the first place, let us see what we are told on this point by recognised theologians. In his book, *The Bible in the Church*, we are reminded by the learned Dr. Westcott, the late Bishop of Durham, that the dispersion of the Jews exercised a great influence upon the spread of Christianity. "The pagans got the idea of monotheism, while the Jews themselves dropped the idea of a 'kingdom' and substituted a 'faith.'" He also

[1] In the *Nineteenth Century and After*, November, 1904.

reminds us of the broad unity of the Roman Empire, and of the dispersion of the Jews being co-extensive with its limits, and concludes that "during the lifetime of St. Paul every condition was realised for proclaiming the Gospel to the world." "Without such preparation," he says, "the spread of Christianity would be *historically inconceivable*, and it is a remarkable example of Divine Providence." Here, then, we have an admission of purely natural causes, and, although the believer may be able to look upon them with reverence, as Providential, he can hardly claim them to be at the same time a witness to the power of the Gospel. Also, we shall see that there were many other natural causes at work, and that among them were some which the pious would be the last to connect with a Divine Providence.

Historians find that the rapidity of the spread has been much exaggerated, and that it was not until the Emperor Constantine convened the Council of Nicæa in A.D. 325 that the spread commenced to emerge from insignificance. Even then the adhesion to the new Faith was for a long period of a purely nominal character, the unwilling converts remaining, to all intents, pagans after they were baptised. The spread of Christianity was for a long time confined to cosmopolitan trading towns only, the villagers remaining pagans—hence the name. (*Mutatis mutandis*, it is the villagers who are now the last to be touched by the spread of "paganism.") What were the "Providential" methods of conversion? The prevailing ignorance and superstition were taken advantage of by the propagators of the Gospel and frauds freely perpetrated, while "edicts of toleration removed the temporal disadvantages which had

hitherto retarded the progress of Christianity."[1] After the Emperor Constantine had been converted, "the cities which signalised a forward zeal, by the voluntary destruction of their temples, were distinguished by municipal privileges, and rewarded with popular donations."[2] When these measures failed, Church and State had recourse to persecution, quite as cruel as, and on a scale that far exceeded, the persecution of the early Christians by the heathen. For instance, the Emperor Theodosius, at the suggestion of the ecclesiastics who governed his conscience, promulgated, in the space of fifteen years (A.D. 380–394), "at least fifteen severe edicts against the heretics, more especially against those who rejected the doctrine of the Trinity."[3] Buddhism, on the contrary, unlike Christianity and Mohammedanism, was promulgated without persecution or religious wars, and spread far more rapidly than Christianity. In his apologetic work, *Anti-Theistic Theories*, Dr. Flint refers to Buddhism thus: "The very marvellous system of thought called Buddhism, which originated in India about 500 years B.C., has spread over a greater area of the earth and gained more adherents than even Christianity, and by peaceful means—by the power of persuasion—not by the force of arms, not by persecution."

Why did the Emperor Constantine embrace Christianity? Was it not mainly because he believed that it had a power to wipe away his own heinous crimes?[4] Even his old age "was disgraced by the opposite,

[1] See Gibbon's *Rome*, vol. iii., p. 27 (ed. 1809).

[2] *Ibid*, vol. iii., p. 27. [3] *Ibid*, vol. iv., p. 21.

[4] Among his victims were: his father-in-law (A.D. 310); sister's husband (314); nephew (319); wife (320); former friend (321); sister's husband (325); own son (326).

yet reconcilable, vices of rapaciousness and prodigality."[1] Although he acknowledged the Faith, he put off his baptism till he was on his death-bed, in order that he might continue to lead a wicked life as long as possible.[2] As an instrument for spreading God's word he is even worse than that royal adulterer and murderer whom we are asked to look upon as a prototype of Christ and His prime ancestor.

On all these matters of history the learned Bishop Westcott is silent, although, as examples of Divine Providence, they would appear sufficiently remarkable. Lest Gibbon's testimony be deemed untrustworthy on account of his anti-Christian bias, the following extract from a prize essay in Christian apologetics may be noted. Not only does it bear out some of the historian's statements concerning the causes of the spread of Christianity, but it discloses the significant fact that the clergy increased their power and influence by working upon the emotions of wealthy women, and that £. s. d. and its female contributors were then, as now, a *sine qua non*.[3]—"Nine years after the conversion of Constantine to the Christian faith he promulgated that great edict which, more than any other enactment, may be said to have lain at the foundation

[1] Gibbon's *Rome*, vol. ii., p. 337 (ed. 1809).

[2] The death-bed baptism of Constantine is described by Eusebius, the Bishop of Cæsarea, in his *Life of Constantine*, bk. iv., chaps. 61, 62, 63, and 64. The Bishop assumes the salvation of Constantine with the utmost confidence, and says: "He was removed about mid-day to the presence of his God, leaving his mortal remains to his fellow-mortals, and carrying into fellowship with God that part of his being which was capable of understanding and loving Him."

[3] It has been urged upon me by my Christian friends that the enormous funds at the disposal of the various Christian propagandist societies testify to the growth, not the decay, of the Christian faith. If these funds were chiefly derived from the small donations of the many, there would be something in this argument. Such, however, is not the case.

of clerical power during the ensuing centuries, and relieved the Christian Church from that restriction under which, in common with the Jews, they had so long laboured—the incapacity of profiting by the testamentary liberality of their wealthy proselytes. To convince us of the abundance in which the stream of wealth flowed into the newly opened channel, and of the influence obtained by the clergy, in those days as in the present, over the piety and pliability of the weaker sex, more especially at Rome, we possess not only the testimony of a Pagan historian,[1] but the less suspicious evidence of an edict published by the Emperor Valentinian[2] fifty years after that of Constantine, addressed to Damasus, Bishop of that city, and imposing a limit to the extravagant donations of females. The clergy, moreover, might look for an increase of worldly substance not only from the prosperity of their friends, but from the downfall of their enemies; for the Theodosian code contains a series of stringent enactments by the Emperor Honorius,[3] in terms of which not only the deserted temples of Paganism, but even the meeting-houses and possessions of Donatists, Manichæan, and other heretical corporations, were made over to the Catholic Church."[4]

There was yet another, and possibly the chief, cause for the ultimate spread of Christianity. In the

[1] Ammian. Marcell. l. xxvii. c. 3.

[2] *Cod. Theodos.*, Lib. xvi. tit. ii. l. 20.

[3] Lib. xvi. tit. x. l. 20, and tit. v. legg. 43, 52, 57, 65.

[4] See pp. 58-9 of the *Beneficial Influence of the Ancient Clergy* (the title under which the Hulsean Prize Essay for 1850 was subsequently published in book form), by the late Henry Mackenzie, B.A., scholar of Trinity College, Cambridge. Other quotations are given in the Appendix.

chapter on comparative mythology I have described and commented upon the various rationalistic theories concerning the origins of Christian beliefs and ceremonies. As a matter of fact, Mithraism spread just as much, or more, until Christianity obtained the necessary political power to suppress it. Not only from these anti-Christian theories, but also from the admissions of apologists concerning them, it appears that Christianity gained ground, not so much because there was something new either in its dogma or in its promise, but rather because these were so closely paralleled in many pagan cults. Let us take, for example, the spread of Christianity in Egypt. "The Egyptians who embraced Christianity found that the moral system of the old cult and that of the new religion were so similar, and the promises of resurrection and immortality in each so alike, that they transferred their allegiance from Osiris to Jesus of Nazareth without difficulty. Moreover, Isis and the child Horus were straightway identified with Mary the Virgin and her Son."[1] "The knowledge of the ancient Egyptian religion which we now possess fully justifies the assertion that the rapid growth and progress of Christianity in Egypt were due mainly to the fact that the new religion, which was preached there by St. Mark and his immediate followers, in all its essentials so closely resembled that which was the outcome of Osiris, Isis, and Horus that popular opposition was entirely disarmed."[2] We have, then, here one of the main factors in the growth of Christianity. I cannot find that Bishop Westcott recognises this as a part of the preparation, in which the

[1] *The Gods of the Egyptians*, Preface, p. xv. [2] *Ibid.*

hand of God can be traced; but advanced apologists very largely do so now, and hence the precious theory of progressive revelation.

We may now pass on to another very popular argument.

### § 5. *The Noble Army of Martyrs.*

My allusions to religious persecutions may remind some of my readers of the experiences of the early Christians, and of the witness to the truth of Christianity furnished by the "noble army of martyrs"; and they may say: "Admitting that there be nothing extraordinary in the mere fact of Christianity's spread, you must allow that its power over men's minds is little, if at all, short of miraculous. Men could not have given their lives for a falsehood." This argument will not bear the slightest scrutiny. "Steadfastness under persecution says much for the sincerity, and still more for the tenacity, of the believer, but very little for the objective truth of that which he believes."[1] Supposing the noble army were a historical fact, the argument based upon it would be adequately met by pointing to the last Ghazi who ran amok in the hope of a speedy delivery from a dirty and ugly spouse on earth, and of reaping the reward of a clean and lovely houri in heaven.

But the noble army is not altogether a historical fact. The truth is that martyr-making became an ecclesiastical industry. The historian Gibbon estimates that at most about two thousand Christians fell in the Diocletian persecution—which was the only general persecution—and this estimate is now

[1] Huxley's *Essays on Controverted Questions*, p. 9, Prologue.

commonly accepted. "Since," says Gibbon, "it cannot be doubted that the Christians were more numerous, and their enemies more exasperated, in the time of Diocletian than they had ever been in any former persecution, this probable and moderate computation may teach us to estimate the number of primitive saints and martyrs who sacrificed their lives for the important purpose of introducing Christianity into the world."[1] Compare these figures with the numbers who have suffered death in modern times for the sake of introducing a non-Christian faith. The Bab Abbas Effendi suffered martyrdom for his zeal in 1850, and between that date and now the most conservative opinion on the Babi martyrdoms puts them at ten thousand. (N.B.—No hopes of wealth and honours, no imperial edicts, have assisted the really remarkable spread of Babism.) As a matter of fact, a considerable portion of the history of man is a history of his martyrdom. "Our own prosperity is founded on the agonies of the past."[2] If religious ladies could spare the time (from the absorbing occupation of reading the very latest works of fiction or the lives of the "grandes amoureuses") to read Winwood Reade's *Martyrdom of Man*, a book none the less interesting because it treats of historical facts, they would begin to realise that martyrs are not a Christian monopoly.

[1] Gibbon's *Rome*, vol. ii., p. 257 (ed. 1809). In 1638, forty thousand Japanese Christians were put to death in the great Castle of Hara, the *Dutch traders at Nagasaki supplying cannon and gunpowder to be used against their fellow-Christians.* (Mentioned in *The Christian Faith in Japan*, p. 19, a book published by the S. P. G.) This wholesale butchery, however, marked the destruction, not the introduction, of Christianity.

[2] Quoted from page 543 of *The Martyrdom of Man*, seventeenth edition (1903).

## § 6. *The Universality of the Religious Instinct.*

### THE HYPOTHESIS STATED.

The fact that a large proportion of the human race, including some of the greatest[1] in thought and action, continue, or appear to continue, to believe in God and immortality, is considered by many to furnish the best proof for the truth of the belief. The Church naturally encourages this opinion, and proceeds to strengthen it further by asserting that the religious instinct is, and always has been, universal. This assertion must now be examined, and, to avoid any misconceptions, it will be advisable in the first place to have some specimens of it before us.

Canon Liddon informs us that "man is ever feeling after God," and that "the thought of God is always latent in the mind of man." "Cicero's statement that there is no nation so barbarous and wild as not to have believed in some divinity is still, notwithstanding certain apparent exceptions, true. A nation of pure Atheists has yet to be discovered."[2] Dr. Flint devotes the seventh of his Lectures on Anti-Theistic theories to the discussion of the question, "Are there tribes of Atheists?" and he comes to the conclusion that "an impartial examination of the relevant facts shows that religion is virtually universal."[3] The Bishop of London is of opinion that "man is a praying animal. He always

[1] Are we not liable to forget that the most brilliant geniuses may make mistakes sometimes, either from want of knowledge of facts, or from a psychological unwillingness to accept them? May not the very subtlety of their intellects aid the work of their own self-deception?

[2] Liddon's *Some Elements of Religion*, p. 48.

[3] Flint's *Anti-Theistic Theories*.

has prayed throughout his history. It is a human instinct. This instinct of prayer points to the existence of God."[1] Dr. Warschauer affirms that the spiritual faculty—a consciousness of "the existence of spiritual realities, of a world beyond the senses"—"constitutes a universal human endowment."[2] Bishop Diggle bids us remember that "human nature is ineradicably religious."[3]

### THE RATIONALIST'S CONTENTION.

The Rationalist asks: What grounds have we for assuming that the existence of religious belief points to the existence of a religious instinct? Is not a man's religion determined by the geographical accident of his birth? Has not his religion to be diligently instilled into him from the cradle? How, then, can it be said that man is by nature religious? How can it be said that the craving for a deity is instinctive? To this the Christian apologist may reply that, however much the precise form of the religious belief may be due to education, no belief of any kind could be engendered without a predisposition to accept it. Have we not seen, however, that primitive beliefs were the natural offspring of fear and wonder? Inability to account for phenomena, ignorance of the laws of nature, and those abnormal psychical experiences concerning which science has but now commenced to furnish natural explanations, all combined to turn primitive men into staunch

[1] See address to the Royal Naval Volunteers by their hon. chaplain, the Bishop of London, reported in the *Church Times* for June 23rd, 1905.

[2] *Anti-Nunquam*, p. 80.

[3] See his inaugural address at the Church Congress, October, 1906.

supernaturalists. For the same reasons, children in years as well as children in knowledge have always been predisposed to belief in the supernatural. This predisposition (it can hardly be called an instinct) may be universal, but it does not lead necessarily to belief in a deity. For that there must be education. If it be an instinct, it is not a religious instinct, although a soil eminently suitable for the sowing of supernatural dogmas.

Admitting, for the sake of argument, that the origin of religious beliefs and the process by which ancestral beliefs have been assimilated can be left out of consideration—in other words, that the ethnologist's theories of the evolution of the idea of God and the educational factor may be disregarded—the supposition that there is a universal religious instinct must be relinquished if, as the Rationalist contends, religious belief itself is not universal. Is such a contention warranted by acknowledged facts? Into this we shall now inquire.

### THE APOLOGIST'S VIEWS CONCERNING SUPERSTITION AND THE RELIGIOUS INSTINCT.

At the outset of the inquiry we at once experience a difficulty. It is not at all clear what the apologist includes under the category of religious beliefs. If it be taken as an axiom that the grossest superstition, the mere belief in the supernatural, is the germ of a religious belief, and therefore that all ignorant or superstitious persons have the religious instinct, then the proposition will be true for practically the whole of mankind in the remote past, and for a very large proportion in the present. Whether it be primeval man who frequently believed only in magic, usually in

devils, and rarely in divinities, or whether it be the twentieth-century lady of fashion who wears a white elephant amulet to bring her luck at "Bridge," both are imbued with the religious instinct. The absurdity of the supposition is fully apparent if we only carry it far enough.

It is by no means easy to understand where the apologist draws the line. He may not say so, but his contention really does seem to point to the absurdity that almost any crude superstition springs from a divine spark. The neo-apologist, however, will do well to reflect that the establishment of any connection between superstition and religion only plays into the hands of the Rationalist, who maintains that there is certainly the closest connection between the two. I am compelled to enter into these details, for, among the facts which I am about to bring forward in contradiction of the assertion of universality, some relate to instances of pure superstitions which might nevertheless be construed into signs of the religious instinct. If the apologist does not go quite so far as this, my task will be rendered much easier. Perhaps, as Dr. Flint is recognised as one of the most eminent of the Christian apologists, the conclusions to which he comes will represent the unspoken opinion of others. He says that, "if savage tribes have some sort of superstitious belief, it would only be in accord with modern theories regarding the evolution of the idea of God. .....The presence of false religion is as good evidence of the existence of religion as the presence of true religion.....Perhaps, if we may say that religion is man's belief in a being or beings mightier than himself and inaccessible to his senses, but not indifferent

to his sentiment and actions, with the feelings and practices which flow from such belief, we have a definition of the kind required, one excluding nothing which can be called religion, and including nothing which is only partially present in religion."[1] This definition would not, one may presume, include mere belief in magic, but might be taken to include a man's belief in devils. As there are many who would not agree that devil-worship and the like can have any connection with god-worship, I shall follow the ethnologist in citing examples of the absence of god-worship as evidence of the absence of the religious instinct; but I shall also give examples in which there is no appearance of worship either of god or devil. These will chiefly be drawn from present-day beliefs and customs, because now, if ever, the contention of the religionist should hold good, and also because it has been incidentally examined with reference to ancient beliefs in a previous chapter.

### BELIEFS OF SAVAGE MAN.

Among the concluding remarks of Darwin's *Descent of Man* we read: "The belief in God has often been advanced as not only the greatest, but the most complete, of all the distinctions between man and the lower animals. It is, however, impossible, as we have seen, to maintain that this belief is innate or instinctive in man. On the other hand, a belief in all-pervading spiritual agencies seems to be universal, and apparently follows from a considerable advance in the reasoning powers of man, and from a still greater

[1] See *Anti-Theistic Theories*, Lecture vii., "Are there Tribes of Atheists?"

advance in his faculties of imagination, curiosity, and wonder. I am aware that the assumed instinctive belief in God has been used by many persons as an argument for His existence; but this is a rash argument, as we should thus be compelled to believe in the existence of many cruel and malignant spirits, possessing only a little more power than man; for the belief in them is far more general than the belief in a beneficent Deity."[1]

Again, in Huxley's essay on "The Evolution of Theology" we read: "In its simplest condition, such as may be met with among the Australian savages, theology is a mere belief in the existence, powers, and disposition (usually malignant) of ghost-like entities who may be propitiated or scared away; but no cult can properly be said to exist. *And in this stage theology is wholly independent of ethics.*"

Sir John Lubbock, now Lord Avebury, states the argument against the universality of religion in his *Prehistoric Times*. He asks: "How can a people who are unable to count their own fingers possibly raise their minds so far as to admit even the rudiments of religion?" And he sums up his observations on various tribes by saying: "Indeed, the first idea of God is almost always an evil spirit."[2]

"The idea that the northern tribes [of America] venerated one supreme and all-powerful 'great spirit,' by whom man and the world were created, is based on erroneous interpretation; *Wakanda* of the Dakotas, and *Manito* of the Algonquins, in no wise coming under such a designation."[3] "These terms,"

[1] *The Descent of Man*, pp. 394–5.
[2] Quoted by Dr. Flint in the lecture above referred to.
[3] See *The Living Races of Mankind*, pp. 721–3.

writes Mr. W. J. McGee, "cannot justly be rendered into *Spirit*, much less into *Great Spirit*."[1] "Their religion," writes another well-known ethnologist, Mr. G. Mooney, "is zootheism, or animal-worship, with the survival of a still earlier stage, which included the worship of all tangible objects, combined with the beginnings of a higher system in which the elements and the great powers of nature are deified."[2] Zootheism, the religion that has survived, does not embrace a belief in a Mightier Being, nor does this deterioration in "religion" suit the theory of a progressive revelation. We may also note that the belief of the North American in witchcraft has led to terrible slaughter, human life being sacrificed on an enormous and frightful scale.

Andrew Lang (in the third chapter of his book, *Magic and Religion*) instances Australian tribes, and says: "Nobody dreams of propitiating gods or spirits by prayer [compare Bishop Ingram's statement that man is a *praying* animal!] while magic is universally practised." There is, as Mr. Lang observes, "no room for a God, nor for an idea of a future life, except the life of successive re-incarnations." "I do not think," writes[3] Professor Baldwin Spencer, "that there is really any direct evidence of any Australian native belief in a 'Supreme Being' in our sense of the term."

Similarly among the Fuegians (another of the lowest races of mankind) "almost every old man is a magician, who is supposed to have the power of life and death, and to be able to control the weather. But the

[1] *The Living Races of Mankind*, pp. 721–3. [2] *Ibid.*
[3] In a letter to Dr. Frazer. See the *Fortnightly Review*, July, 1905, p. 171.

members of the French scientific expedition to Cape Horn could detect nothing worthy of the name of religion among these savages."[1] Here, then, even if we adopt Dr. Flint's broad definition, we surely have examples of the absence of the religious instinct. There is a fundamental distinction, and even opposition of principle, between magic and religion, as we shall see by a study of the opinions of those best qualified to offer them.

### MAGIC AND RELIGION.

"Wherever sympathetic magic occurs," says Dr. Frazer, "in its pure unadulterated form, it assumes that in nature one event follows another necessarily and invariably *without the intervention of any spiritual or personal agency*"[2] (the italics are mine). "The magician supplicates no higher power; he sues the favour of no fickle and wayward being; he abases himself before no awful deity."[3] "I have," says Dr. Frazer,[4] "come to agree with Sir A. C. Lyall and Mr. F. B. Jevons in recognising a fundamental distinction, and even opposition, of principle between magic and religion." This opinion must be shared by every unbiassed mind, and it is curious, and not without importance, to observe, with Dr. Frazer, that the "fundamental conception" of sympathetic magic "is identical with that of modern science."[5] "Underlying the whole system is a faith—implicit, but real and firm—in the order and uniformity of nature."[6]

[1] *The Golden Bough*, p. 73, note 1. See also (as there noted) *Mission Scientifique du Cap Horn*, vii., "Anthropologie, Ethnographie," par P. Hyades et J. Deniker (Paris, 1891), pp. 253–257.
[2] *The Golden Bough*, p. 61. [3] *Ibid.*
[4] In the Preface to the second edition of *The Golden Bough*.
[5] *The Golden Bough*, p. 61. [6] *Ibid.*

The belief in the efficacy of magic, it should be remembered, is exceedingly widespread, even at the present time. According to Mr. Haddon[1] (citing Dr. Jevons), "four-fifths of mankind, probably, believe in sympathetic magic." Dr. Frazer, too, reminds us that among the ignorant and superstitious classes of modern Europe it is very much what it was thousands of years ago in Egypt and India, and what it now is among the lowest savages surviving in the remotest corners of the world. "If the test of truth," exclaims Dr. Frazer, "lay in a show of hands or a counting of heads, the system of magic might appeal, with far more reason than the Catholic Church, to the proud motto, '*Quod semper, quod ubique, quod ab omnibus*,' as the sure and certain credential of its own infallibility."[2]

Not only is there an opposition of principle between magic and religion, not only is belief in the former a universal faith, a truly catholic creed, but it is now generally recognised by ethnologists that "in the evolution of thought, magic, as representing a lower intellectual stratum, has [as 'has been plainly suggested, if not definitely formulated, by Professor H. Oldenberg in his able book, *Die Religion des Veda*'] probably everywhere preceded religion."[3]

The popular notion that the religious instinct is universal is perhaps natural enough, but it is not borne out by these significant facts and conclusions. Indeed, it would be far more correct to say that an instinct, the very antithesis of what the Church

[1] In his little book called *Magic and Fetishism* (Constable, 1906).
[2] *The Golden Bough*, p. 74.
[3] See Preface to the second edition of *The Golden Bough*.

would mean by the religious instinct, was at one time, and even now is, well-nigh universal.

### RELIGION IN MODERN CHINA.

So far we have seen that the opponents of the "Universal" theory presume in their argument that devil-worship has no relation to true god-worship, and we may note that it never even entered the heads of such men as Darwin and Lubbock that it would ever be held that these are essentially identical. Nor is this peculiar opinion held by clerics who have studied devil-worship on the spot. Thus the Rev. Arthur H. Smith, D.D., twenty-two years a missionary in China, describes[1] the fear of goblins and devils which figures so largely in Taoism; but, far from suggesting the presence of the religious instinct, he laments its total absence. Among his many pertinent observations I commend the following to the serious consideration of those who believe in a universal religious instinct and in a progressive revelation: "*If the Chinese ever did recognise the true God, that knowledge has certainly been most effectually lost*, like an inscription on an ancient coin now covered with the accumulated rust of millenniums.[2].....Sir Thomas Wade, whose long familiarity with China and the Chinese might be supposed to entitle him to speak with authority on so plain a question as whether the Chinese have or have not a religion, has recently published his opinion as follows: 'If religion is held to mean more than mere ethics, I deny that the Chinese have a religion.'"[3]

[1] In his interesting and standard work, *Chinese Characteristics*, ch. xxvi.

[2] *Chinese Characteristics*, p. 289.

[3] *Ibid*, p. 306.

Speaking of Chinese nature-worship, Dr. Smith says: "*No prayer* is uttered.....What is it that at such times the people worship? Sometimes they affirm that the object of worship is heaven and earth. Sometimes they say that it is heaven, and again they call it 'the old man of the sky.' The latter term often leads to an impression that the Chinese do have a real perception of a personal Deity. But when it is ascertained that this supposed person is frequently matched by another called 'grandmother earth,' the value of the inference is open to serious question."[1]

As to there being no such thing as an atheistic people, are we to take no account of the cultured classes? Mark the following: "The polytheism and pantheism of the lower classes of Chinese are matched in the upper classes by what appears to be *pure atheism.....There never was on this earth a body of educated and cultured men so thoroughly agnostic and atheistic as the mass of Confucian scholars.*[2].....Its absolute indifference to the profoundest spiritual truths in the nature of man is the most melancholy characteristic of the Chinese mind—its ready acceptance of a body without a soul, of a soul without a spirit, of a spirit without life, of a cosmos without a cause, *a universe without a God.*"[3]

Alluding to the mixture of Confucianism with Taoism and Buddhism, he remarks: "Any kind of a divinity which seems adapted to exert a favourable influence in any given direction will be patronised, just as a man who happens to need a new umbrella goes to some shop where they keep such goods for sale. To inquire into the antecedents of the divinity

[1] *Chinese Characteristics*, p. 291. [2] *Ibid*, pp. 292–3.
[3] *Ibid*, p. 313.

who is thus worshipped no more occurs to a Chinese than it would occur to an Englishman who wanted the umbrella to satisfy himself as to the origin of umbrellas, and when they first came into general use.....The Chinaman has carried 'intellectual hospitality' to the point of logical suicide, but he does not know it, and cannot be made to understand it when he is told."[1]

Three questions suggest themselves. If the pious lady who contributes towards mission work in China only knew of this, would she be pleased?[2] Are there not many English people strangely like the Chinese in an umbrella-patronage of Christianity? Finally, does not the modern apologist (with his theory of Progressive Revelation and his idea that Christianity has yet much to learn from, and will be improved by contact with, the faiths of the East) carry "intellectual hospitality" to the point of logical suicide?

The advice of Confucius was to reverence the gods as if they existed,[3] but in any case to keep them at a distance, and have as little to do with them as possible; and his advice has been followed. Dr. Smith tells us that the popular instinct has taken at its true value the uncertainty conveyed in the words "as if," and has embodied them in current sayings which accurately

[1] *Chinese Characteristics*, pp. 294 and 295.

[2] Also if she heard of General Chaffee's remarks to an American Methodist audience in New York not long ago. While praising the work of the missionaries, he told his audience that he met many of the most prominent Chinamen while at Pekin, and he was obliged to say that he did not meet *a single intelligent* Chinaman who expressed a desire to embrace the Christian religion. (Reported in the Hong Kong *Daily Press* of May 9th, 1903.)

[3] The classical quotation commonly seen over the door of a temple is: "Worship the gods as if they were present."

express the state of mind of the mass of the people. Thus:—

> Call on the gods as if they came;
> But, if you don't, it's all the same.

And again:—

> Worship the gods as if the gods were there;
> But, if you worship not, the gods don't care.[1]

The absence of the instinct of reverence may be judged by the following episode related by Dr. Smith: "A District Magistrate tried a case which involved a priest, and, by implication, the Buddha which was the occupant of the temple. This *god* was summoned to appear before the magistrate and told to kneel, which he failed to do, whereupon the magistrate ordered him to be given five hundred blows, by which time the god was reduced to a heap of dust, and judgment was pronounced against him by default."[2] (Of their manner of treating *devils* I had, not long ago, a personal experience. Standing on the quay at Shanghai, I was deafened by the bang, bang, bang of ear-splitting bombs exploded by a crowd of Chinamen. However crude their method, their intentions were excellent. They wished to scare away the devils who might have elected to accompany their friends on the voyage to England.)

Finally, as a commentary on the oft-repeated assertion that the great difference between the sacred books of the East and of the Bible is the low plane of morality in the former, the following words quoted by Dr. Smith are of considerable interest: "No people," says Mr. Meadows, "whether of ancient or modern times, has possessed a sacred literature so completely exempt as the Chinese from

[1] *Chinese Characteristics*, pp. 299-300. [2] *Ibid*, p. 305.

licentious descriptions, and from every offensive expression. There is not a single sentence in the whole of the Sacred Books and their annotations that may not be read aloud in any family circle in England."[1] Can this be said of our Bible?

### APOSTATES IN CHRISTENDOM.

If I have given the religious attitude of the modern Chinese the largest share of attention, it must be remembered that they far outnumber any other nation in the world. Also I think the fallacies regarding the religious instinct will perhaps stand out more clearly if we consider the present twentieth century, instead of millenniums B.C. I have said nothing as yet of the apostates in Christendom—the Darwins, the Huxleys, and the Spencers—who declare that they are without the religious instinct. We must consider them ruled out of court, for are we not told[2] that "there are men with faculties of insight amounting to genius in other regions of mental activity who have never developed the spiritual faculty, and are thus debarred the privileges of spiritual geniuses—geniuses in the region in which man holds communion with God"?

Lately much capital has been made out of the following statement appearing in Darwin's *Autobiography:* "Up to the age of thirty or beyond it, poetry such as Milton, Byron, Wordsworth, etc., gave me great delight. But now for many years I cannot endure to read a line of poetry. I have lost my taste for pictures and music. My mind seems to have become a kind of machine for grinding general laws

[1] *Chinese Characteristics*, p. 288.
[2] See p. 78 of *Anti-Nunquam*.

out of large collections of facts." This loss of certain tastes indicated—so the pulpit would have the pew suppose—that that portion of Darwin's mind which was competent to understand spiritual things had atrophied. Does God reveal Himself, then, only or especially to the æsthetic? The artist—and here I include the poet, painter, sculptor, musician, artistic novelist, and also the man who has created nothing, but who has the artistic temperament—will, if he has a religion, have one of a sort harmonising with his artist soul. It must be a religion which allows scope for the cultivation of the beautiful, without being necessarily too closely associated with a rigid code of ethics. Is the æsthetic mind always perfectly balanced? How does it compare on an average with that of the moral philosopher guiding his life by the light of reason and living up to the standard of his professions? Darwin has assisted in establishing a great truth concerning the development of the world. He has been, according to the Christian evolutionist, the chosen instrument for a fresh revelation of God's majesty. Yet, in spiritual endowments, every pious Christian, however ignorant and unintellectual, ranks before him! Strange, passing strange. The very qualifications necessary for accomplishing God's purpose debarred Darwin from fellowship with Him! For such an argument to be worth a moment's consideration it should at least apply generally. This it most distinctly does not. Preachers, who find Darwin's candid remark about himself a convenient one upon which to base a homily, have neglected to acquaint themselves with the statements of other agnostic scientists—of Huxley, for instance. "I have yet," he declared, "to meet with any form of art in

which it has not been possible for me to take as acute a pleasure as, I believe, it is possible for men to take."[1]

### RELIGION IN MODERN JAPAN.

At the risk of increasing the citation of examples *ad nauseam*, I cannot omit a passing reference to the Japanese. I shall reserve for the last chapter my remarks on the "phenomenon" of their non-theological moral training, and confine myself to the present condition of their faith as given by a clergyman, the Rev. Herbert Moore, who was for some years a missionary in Japan. Mr. Moore tells us: "We are all Shintoists to a certain extent, for Shinto is the non-Christian version of the Communion of Saints. And we recognise the truth that Buddhism contains when we read Ecclesiastes in church.....But these old faiths are fast perishing from the hearts of the Japanese, leaving behind them blank godlessness, indifference, and materialism.....Out of 942 students in Tokyo who recently gave an account of their religious position, 555 declared themselves unbelievers in any religion, 68 were Christians, 18 Shintoists, and most of the remaining 319 Buddhists."[2]

Mr. Moore, in chapter xiv. of his book, quotes a summary of the situation by the *Japan Times*, which all who are interested in the question whether Japan is likely to adopt Christianity would do well to read. As bearing on the particular point we are now discussing, the following may be noted: "We cannot

[1] See p. 164 of *Science and Education Essays*, by T. H. Huxley (Macmillan & Co; 1895).

[2] *The Christian Faith in Japan*, pp. 42, 43.

believe that it [Christianity] will ever succeed in getting a firm hold upon the minds of the educated classes. Men of these classes have for centuries lived and died under a system of morality which inculcates virtue for virtue's sake, and entirely dispenses with supernatural sanctions of any sort.....We cannot agree with those who, like Mr. Toyama and Mr. Fukuzawa, recommend it to their countrymen, while they themselves refuse to believe in it, except as a collection of useful superstitions."[1] How many Toyamas and Fukuzawas are there not in modern Christendom?

CLASSICAL HISTORY.

It matters not where you direct your searchlight, you cannot fail to discover instance upon instance confuting the pious assertion of a universal religious instinct. Take the case of the great Roman poet and philosopher, Lucretius, whose unique poem, *De Rerum Natura*, has acquired a new interest in the present day. He set before himself the task of finally crushing that fear of the gods, and that fear of death resulting from it, which he regarded as the source of all human ills. He denied the two bases of all religion (as we understand it)—the doctrines of a supernatural Governor of the world, and of a future life.

I will not continue to multiply examples. It is surely clear that the religious instinct is *not* universal.

[1] *The Christian Faith in Japan*, pp. 128–9.

## NOTE ON HUMAN SENTIMENT AS TO A FUTURE LIFE.

What is the Rationalistic explanation of that essence of the "religious instinct," belief in an after life? It may, I think, be summed up briefly in some such words as these: "The conception of non-existence is an effort beyond the power of human intellect. As long as man thinks, his ego is fully conscious of its existence, and not able to grasp the idea of non-existence. Thus religion is a functional weakness."[1] The instinct of self-preservation does the rest; it transforms the speculation into an ardent desire. "The theory of a continued existence after death is nothing more than a certain manifestation of the impulse for self-preservation, as the instinct for self-preservation itself is nothing more than the form under which our vital energies, that have their seat in every cell of our organism, manifest themselves to our consciousness."[2] Is not this a perfectly natural explanation of the craving for immortality?

This craving, as we have seen, is not universal; while, in Buddhism, it is assumed that man ought to strive for extinction. Even among Western nations the craving is not so common as it is generally supposed to be, and as the Church confidently takes for granted. In support of this conclusion, I should mention that my readers will find a startling confirmation in an article on "Human Sentiment with regard to a Future Life," which appears in the *Proceedings of the Society for Psychical Research* for October, 1904. The article is written by a well-known psychologist, Mr. F. C. S. Schiller, Fellow and tutor of Corpus Christi College, Oxford, and author of various well-known works on the mind (*Riddles of the Sphinx*, 1891; *Humanism*, 1903, etc.). He reviews the results of a laborious inquiry by the American branch of the S. P. R., and comes to the conclusion that "the returns show a hitherto hardly suspected *weakness* of the desire for knowledge of a future life,"[3] and

[1] See chapter ii. of *Conventional Lies of our Civilisation*, by Max Nordau. [2] *Ibid.*

[3] P. 439 of the *Proceedings of the S. P. R.*

that, "amid all the various phenomena of human psychology, distress due to uncertainty about one's fate after death seems to be one of the *rarest.*"[1] Mr. Schiller, the apostle of Professor W. James in this country, shows that he himself possesses the craving for an after life in no ordinary degree, and this adds all the more force to his statement that the instinct is in nowise universal. I, too, once had a craving so intense that hell itself seemed less awful than total annihilation. To those who have built up high hopes their destruction must come as a terrible shock—a shock eventually relieved by a feeling of resignation to the inevitable.

What we, as anxious parents, have to ask ourselves is: Do we not agree with St. Paul when he says, "If Christ be not risen, then is our preaching vain, and your faith is also vain"; and are we not aware that, with the advance of knowledge, the present widespread disbelief in the resurrection of Jesus Christ will become more and more general? Even now how many disbelieve or preserve an agnosticism regarding the chief dogmas of the Christian creed? How many are sceptical concerning the continuance of consciousness after death? Does either science or common sense support a belief in the survival of personality? Are we right, then, in permitting our children's minds to be imbued with a "sure and certain hope of the resurrection to eternal life"? Is it a kind act to expose our children to the pain of a rude awakening by instilling hopes that are destined to be ultimately shattered? *Is it a wise act to allow their morality to be based upon foundations that are doomed to destruction?* It is not as if we were forced into telling fairy stories because we shrink from negative teaching. It is not as if there were no natural incentives to right conduct, no positive teaching possible, without an admixture of theological speculations. Non-theological moral instruction is not only possible, but is urgently wanted and will be extremely beneficial. This will appear more fully in the following chapter.

[1] P. 441 of the *Proceedings of the S. P. R.*

# CONCLUSION

## Chapter VIII.

## CONCLUSION

### § 1. *A Summary.*

The hostile evidence appears to be overwhelming. Christianity cannot be true. Provided that we see things as they really are, and not as we wish them to be, we cannot but come to this conclusion. Let me recall to the reader's mind the more salient points.

Chapter I.: The Situation.—All over Christendom a great conflict has commenced between naturalists and supernaturalists. The real attitude of the laity, and especially of the cultured portion of it, is far more sceptical than the clergy imagine, or, at any rate, are prepared to admit. They do not realise that agnostics and semi-believers have, not deliberately perhaps, but none the less really, joined in a conspiracy of silence, either on account of their conviction of the need for Christianity as a restraint during the prevalence of ignorance, or on account of their regard for public and private opinion and vested interests, or last but not least, on account of sheer indifference. To put it frankly, the Churches have for their chief ally nowadays the trinity of ignorance, insincerity, and indifference. Not only is this alliance one which they ought to be the first to repudiate, but it cannot be depended upon in the near future. Though a

mind be built, as it were, in water-tight compartments, a flood of truth that is strong enough will burst them open.

Christianity and science are *not* reconciled. The character of the present wave of scepticism differs from that of all others in the history of Christianity or of mankind, in that it has the support of modern knowledge. It has all the appearance of a wave that will increase in strength, and finally destroy all the present faiths of the world. Plenty of "cheap" agnosticism, of *a priori* "infidelity," is still to be met with, and of this, as Professor Huxley once remarked, a man of the calibre of Butler, of the "Analogy," can easily make short work; but the scepticism of the modern scientist is of another kind. It arises from a mastery of the laws of Nature. The Christian apologies to meet *this* scepticism are unsatisfactory to the last degree. Often they are based on premises the truth of which is open to the gravest doubt, or they betray ignorance of established facts. They are also conflicting, so that the arguments of the advanced and the arguments of the conservative are mutually destructive, the latter frequently bearing out the contentions of the rationalist regarding the former. For these reasons they are totally unconvincing. Meanwhile the main issue of the conflict is confused and delayed by various side issues, which have nothing really to do with the question of Christianity's truth. There is further delay through the currency of a number of popular fallacies.

CHAPTER II.: MIRACLES.—Belief in miracles is necessary if Christianity be true. The various attempts to explain miracles are evasions, not solutions of a difficulty, and are as specious as they are conflicting.

Few thinkers could bring themselves to agree with Canon Mason that miracles are no longer needed because "the Holy Spirit, with His eternal freshness of life, does not cramp Himself by obsolete and antiquated methods of action."[1] The fundamental miracles are not historical facts. The evidence for all miracles is totally inadequate. No miracle has ever occurred.

CHAPTER III.: MODERN BIBLE CRITICISM.—All non-Christian and some Christian theologians accept the conclusions of the Higher Criticism in their entirety, while many learned divines accept much that is destructive of beliefs that have been held for nearly two millenniums. The critics show that the Bible is not historically true, and explain that "we must turn from external details to the great spiritual truths which underlie them." As observed by the Dean of Canterbury,[2] "they only *say* that they are not historical; what they *mean* is that they are not true." The strictly orthodox and the rationalist are at one in agreeing that historic truth is essential to Christianity; that Christianity claims to be built not on ideas, but on facts; and that the far-fetched explanations of the advanced school cannot be accepted. The rationalist, however, finds himself forced to admit the validity of the destructive criticisms, and also finds further grounds for unbelief in the silence of historians, in the manner in which the alleged revelation was transmitted, and in those sober facts which so completely impugn the divinity of Jesus.

[1] See p. 477 of *The Relation of Confirmation to Baptism*, by A. J. Mason, D.D. (Longmans.)

[2] At a men's service held in St. Mary Bredin's Church, Canterbury, on December 4th, 1904.

CHAPTER IV.: COMPARATIVE MYTHOLOGY. — The similarity of beliefs, customs, and teachings in ancient religions with those in the Christian religion are as numerous as they are remarkable. These parallels deprive Christianity of any claim to originality, and furnish an explanation of its origin which completely destroys our belief in its truth. The theory of a progressive revelation is the outcome of dire necessity, for the survival of Christianity depends upon its acceptance. This theory is for many and cogent reasons quite untenable. It is not, and cannot be, accepted by the strictly orthodox. The latter endeavour, therefore, to disprove the closeness of the parallels, or, failing this, to prove that they are Christian accretions. Enlightened divines, on the other hand, acknowledge the parallels, and rely upon the theory of progressive revelation to explain them.

CHAPTER V.: EVOLUTION.—For the benefit of those who may be ill-informed on the subject, the theory of evolution is explained, and convincing proofs of our animal origin are submitted. The theory is generally accepted by the cultured, though much ignorance and prejudice concerning it still prevail. The evolutionary processes are completely at variance with the Bible and with our ideas of God. The Churches as a body do not accept evolution willingly, and are chary in acknowledging its truth in their public utterances. Many of their most distinguished members are, however, evolutionists, and these profess that evolution is helpful to belief. Their arguments are singularly unconvincing. The doctrine of the Fall is untenable.

CHAPTER VI.: THEISTIC PROOFS.—Many, honestly deeming themselves to be Christians, are in reality

either deists or non-Christian theists. The recognised arguments for Theism are the evidences of a First Cause, of design and directivity, and of benevolence. Not one of these is accepted by more than a very small minority of scientific men. The evidence of design and directivity is more apparent than real, while, with regard to benevolence, it would be easier to demonstrate the very reverse. The evidence from religious experience is another argument, which has recently been submitted to the cultured, as a final proof of the existence of the spiritual world. This argument is shown not only to be full of absurdities, but indirectly to furnish natural explanations for much that has hitherto puzzled mankind, and led to belief in the supernatural.

CHAPTER VII.: POPULAR ARGUMENTS.—Finally, there are certain popular arguments which help to confirm the believer, and to determine the friendly attitude of the average unbeliever. Broadly speaking, they are all comprised under two main assertions—Christianity's power for good, and the universality of the religious instinct. So long as we confine ourselves to a shallow and biassed examination, the flaws in these assumptions will pass unnoticed; but when we submit them to a closer examination, with open minds, we find that they cannot be substantiated by the facts of either ancient or modern history.

I may be permitted to add that I attach the greatest importance to the object-lesson now presented to us by Russia and Japan. Not only have we here an excellent illustration of the fallacies concerning the power of Christianity and the connection between conduct and belief, but this illustration has been

given to the whole world. Among the millions who have watched events, thousands upon thousands must have some inkling of the place that religion holds in the minds of these two peoples, and, therefore, must have found much that will cause them to modify their opinions concerning these popular arguments. I cannot imagine any other conjunction of circumstances which could have resulted in such a broadcast sowing of the seeds of scepticism.

THE MAIN CONCLUSION.—It is customary in Christian apologetics to palliate the inadequacy of any one particular argument or set of arguments for belief by reminding us that we must take into consideration the combined weight of all the other (equally inadequate) arguments. The apologist of unbelief has no need to ask this of his readers. On the contrary, he is able to point out a number of arguments, each of which is, of itself, fully sufficient to warrant their joining the ranks of the unbelievers. For instance, he can point to any one of the following as fairly conclusive evidence:—The dismal failure[1] of Christianity after nearly two thousand years' trial; the apparent impossibility of and complete want of evidence for the miracles on which Christianity is founded; the destructive criticism of the Bible, which cannot be gainsaid; the intensely grave suspicions thrown upon the originality of Christianity by the revelations of comparative mythology; the various dilemmas arising from the accepted doctrine of evolution; the inadequacy and conflicting character of the so-called

[1] One phase of this failure was well shown by "Oxoniensis," in his letters which started and ended the "Do We Believe?" correspondence in the *Daily Telegraph*. On the other hand, we find pronounced unbelievers taking a leading part in wise reforms, and devoting their lives to researches that will benefit humanity.

Theistic proofs (proofs of a personal Deity); and, finally, the fallacies in arguments hitherto so popular and faith-producing. We cannot get away from facts. Modern knowledge forces us to admit that the Christian Faith cannot be true.

Having arrived at this main conclusion, the unbeliever is at once confronted with many burning questions. I shall endeavour to outline the answers to those that seem the more pressing; but the subject is a large one, and cannot be adequately treated in a few short paragraphs. The main difficulty is, of course, the morality problem, and, if that admits of a favourable solution, we shall be in a better position to consider the next question: Should the unbeliever keep his unbelief to himself, or should he speak out?

## § 2. *Why Lead a Moral Life?*

### PRELIMINARY REMARKS.

Let me say at once that if, after the elimination of all untruths from Christianity, we could build a belief in God and immortality on the residue, we should then have a far more powerful incentive to right conduct than anything that I am about to urge. I fully admit that to tell the ordinary mortal *brought up in the Christian faith* to do right for right's sake will often be futile, inspiring though the sentiment may be for some few of us. I admit also the fact that morality always tends to the well-being of the individual and the race. It is the one and only sound argument for the working of any ethical purpose in nature, and, if we can feel that in leading the moral life we are helping to carry out some high purpose in which we are personally concerned, such a belief will certainly be of great ethical

value. In the following argument, however, I hope to show that, even without a religious incentive, we have all-sufficient reasons for leading the moral life. At present our morality is bound up with a belief which is false, and which people are beginning to feel and know to be false. Therefore it is more than ever necessary that we should learn more of those reasons for morality which do not depend upon this or that belief.

### THE NECESSITY FOR MORALITY.

The man who does not realise that any such cogent reasons exist will argue: "I quite understand that the welfare of society depends upon the moral conduct of its members; but why should I care for the good of society? There are many immoral things which I can do without being found out—without any harm coming to me, directly or indirectly. Neither do I believe in the familiar adage, 'Follow nature, and you cannot go wrong.' Civilisation is continually wrestling with nature; we go against nature a thousand times a day. Why should I not follow nature just so far as I can get out of my nerves a maximum of pleasure at the expense of a minimum of pain? Tell me, then, you who do not believe in hell or heaven, you who think we can live under a system of morality which entirely dispenses with supernatural sanctions, why should I lead a moral life?"

To this question I would reply by another: "Have you no self-respect, the commonest and most universal incentive to right conduct, and one which necessarily includes respect for others? Even if your body had health, would your mind have peace without morality?" The essence of happiness is a contented mind. Bodily

ailments and other misfortunes, not of your own making, may often mar your efforts to obtain this desirable frame of mind; but the nearest approach to it that is possible will be gained by leading the moral life. Righteousness contributes usually to success and invariably to happiness, because it is in harmony with the needs and laws of health and social life. Note, please, that I say "contributes." We are not speaking now of circumstances beyond man's control —the calamities and catastrophes, daily and hourly occurring, in accordance with nature's inexorable laws, which would not be affected either way by man's conduct. Also, as there are conditions under which the body may not be affected by immorality discreetly pursued, it will be better to confine our attention to that which *is* always affected—the mind. This will be recognised more clearly when we grasp the fact that the true origin of the guide to conduct lies in the instincts inherited from our animal ancestors.[1]

Man is a social animal, and in his relations with his fellow-men his moral instinct is largely a development of the social instinct. To secure the happiness of the individual as well as of the community, this instinct demands satisfaction. There is nothing which depresses the mind of man or beast more than a thwarted instinct. Life, as Aristotle has well said, is energy which each individual exercises on those

[1] This statement is made on the authority of Darwin and of all our modern naturalists. The theory is established, and its important message to the human race elaborated, in such works as Darwin's *Descent of Man* (see vol. i., chap. v., "The Development of the Intellect and Moral Faculties"), Huxley's *Ethical Lectures* ("Science and Morals," 1886; "Evolution and Ethics," the Romanes' lecture for 1893, etc.), Clodd's *Story of Creation* (chap. xi., on "Social Evolution"), Winwood Reade's *Martyrdom of Man*, and Prince Kropotkin's *Mutual Aid*.

subjects in which he most delights. Man's proper and natural pleasures must consist in the operations by which his work is done and his task accomplished. But various circumstances will often prevent a man or woman from exercising his or her special aptitudes. Thus a natural instinct is disappointed, and complete happiness is out of the question. In the case of the social instinct, its satisfaction, so far as possible, is a supreme necessity, if there is to be any approach to contentment of mind. To attain it there is only one course open—the moral life. Should the individual choose the immoral life, and should he even succeed in following it without suffering social ostracism, he will certainly injure not only the happiness of the community, but also his own chances of such real and permanent happiness as this world might otherwise have afforded him.

### USELESSNESS OF VAGUE THREATS.

But, it may be objected, the average man will not be deterred from wrong-doing by the fear of vague consequences; he is only concerned to snatch the immediate pleasure (or what seems to him to be a pleasure), to satisfy a momentary lust, to secure the gratification of his senses on the "bird-in-the-hand" principle. That is all very true, of course, and incidentally it accounts for the failure of Christianity or any other belief that relies for its ethical effect on a system of vague threats and promises. But once get rid of the nebulosity, and all is changed—so long, that is, as the brain is healthy, and the supremacy of reason acknowledged. Emotions of hate, cupidity, sensuality, and the like, are always liable, as are all other emotions, to cloud the reason—to derange the

brain temporarily; how much more so when there is no clear perception of disagreeable consequences? No man in his senses will act with entire disregard of consequences; it is only when they are not sufficiently clear that they are disregarded. It is absurd to suppose that the ordinary man is such an unthinking animal that he never studies ultimate consequences. The most selfish men and women—and the religious world is not without its fair share of them—think of the morrow. No one more so. It is the exceptional individual of the happy-go-lucky sort, with no enemy but himself, on whom it is difficult to impress the need of thinking ahead.

### THE NEED FOR AN *EARLY* EDUCATION IN ETHICAL PRINCIPLES.

My contention, then, is that a feeling of *certainty* regarding ultimate consequences is, above all others, the most powerful factor in influencing conduct. This certainty will be attained through, and only through, the medium of education. Knowing this, it is the duty of parents and teachers to be continually implanting in the minds of the young the objects of right-doing and the consequences of wrong-doing, wholly apart from questions of belief, not only because such teaching enshrines a great truth, but because this truth is liable to be lost sight of in the mists of theological dogmas and metaphysical theories. Children, it is true, adopt moral principles out of regard for social and parental authority, and not as the result of reasoned conviction, so that at first the scientific reasons for right conduct will doubtless be to some extent unappreciated. But, meanwhile, a habit of mind will be forming, and, as the new teaching will

appeal to the common sense of the growing mind, and not to its credulity, a reasoned conviction will shortly follow. Conduct developed in this manner, free from theological speculations, is based on a firm foundation, which no later experiences in life will be able to upset. It is not nebulous. It is not susceptible of change through an alteration in religious views. It is true. The future generation, so brought up, will regard the consequences of immorality with complete certitude, and will do so without having to extricate themselves, as the present generation must, from objectionable habits of thought and conduct engendered by erroneous teaching.

### THE OBJECT-LESSON FURNISHED BY THE JAPANESE.

This is no abstract theory. We have a concrete and magnificent example before us in a nation whose character is formed entirely by non-theological instruction. I refer, of course, to the Japanese. There are no people more refined, courteous, gentle, amiable, and innately æsthetic than these Latins of the Orient; no people more brave, hardy, and self-controlled; none more cleanly and healthy in body and happy in mind. The Japanese army, by its perfection of transport, commissariat, and equipment, its surgical and sanitary work, its discipline and dash, its passionate patriotism and its humanity to the conquered, surpasses the armies of the Christian nations who send their missionaries to Japan. With regard to sexual morality, "it must be remembered," as Professor Inazo Nitobe remarks, "that, whatever charges may be made against the Japanese people, the same charge can be, and is, actually made against every country, England not excluded, by travellers,

since it is usually the worst, the lax, side of life to which a foreigner is first introduced."[1] Personally, I should say that the charge could be met by pointing to the acknowledged virtues and physical condition of the Japanese, and asking, "Can these be the result of vicious habits?"

There are certain significant circumstances in connection with the present moral condition in Japan which we must not omit to take into consideration. "Untruthfulness, dishonesty, and brutal crime," says Lafcadio Hearn, speaking of Old Japan, "were rarer then than now, as official statistics show; the percentage of crime having been for some years steadily on the increase—which proves, among other things, that the struggle for existence has been intensified. The virtue of Japanese wives was generally in all ages above suspicion."[2] "If there has been a serious relapse among us," says another writer, "it has been the result of the shock occasioned by our contact with the new civilisation, and fortunately not the consequence of the abandoning of a belief in future punishment by an offended God."[3] (What food for thought —falling off in morality attributed to *over-population* and contact with a *Christian* civilisation!) How do the Japanese hope to solve this new problem? By Christianity? Not at all. "Men are beginning to see," continues the same writer, "that in the domain of morality the excellent precepts and propositions by which their fathers were guided under the old *régime*, but which have since fallen into disrepute, are funda-

[1] P. 264 of *Japan by the Japanese*, edited by Alfred Stead.
[2] Pp. 147–8 of Lafcadio Hearn's book, *Kokoro*.
[3] In the *Japan Times*. Quoted by Mr. Moore in his book, *The Christian Faith in Japan*, p. 131.

mentally correct, and that, with slight adaptations in the light of the new civilisation, the old code of morality will serve their purpose under the altered circumstances of the new era."

Only the charge of lack of commercial morality has any foundation in fact, and, with regard to this, here is the true explanation, given, not by a Japanese apologist, but by a Christian missionary: "The Japanese are often charged, and with good reason, with a lack of commercial morality. In days when the military virtues reigned supreme, the handling of trade was deemed an employment which no gentleman would take up; hence the commerce of the country is largely in the hands of men who do not represent her best traditions. Again, certain restrictions of mercy were always granted in the undertaking of a contract, whereas foreigners naturally regard a contract as binding unconditionally. But, in both respects, methods of trade are improving, and in the excellent commercial schools it is taught that 'Honesty is the best policy.' Among members of the humblest ranks of life the most striking instances of honesty will be met with; a jinrikisha man will run after you with the parcel you have forgotten, a shopkeeper will walk to your house to bring you a few cents he accidentally overcharged you."[1]

As to their purely secular education and the severance of belief from conduct, Baron Suyematsu remarks that, "to the outsiders who have not grown up in an atmosphere of this kind, it may appear

[1] *The Christian Faith in Japan*, pp. 53–4. Explanations regarding the shortcomings of the Japanese in the matter of commercial morality will be found in Professor Nitobe's *Bushido*, pp. 64–70, and also, as there mentioned, in Knapp, *Feudal and Moral Japan*, and in Ransome, *Japan in Transition*, ch. viii.

somewhat difficult to comprehend how boys and girls could be thoroughly imbued with moral sentiments without connecting them in some way with religion; but when these are taught with thoroughness, basing their systematic exposition on the duties of human beings towards one another and to the State, and on the noble tradition of their [the children's] own community and the characteristic virtues of their forefathers in which they ought to rejoice, and when appeals are made to the honour and pride which one should feel and value, and, above all, to the conscience of individuals, one's thoughts appear to become imbued with the lessons conveyed, and moral notions thus taught seem to become, *per se*, a kind of undefined, but nevertheless potent and serviceable, religion."[1] Again, Baron Suyematsu tells us elsewhere that "the educated classes consider that he who does what is good for good's sake, and not for a fear of anything exterior, is the most courageous man, and to be courageous is the most important feature of *Bushido*. The probability is that, were a Japanese gentleman a devout adherent of any particular form of religion, he would rather conceal it than make a display of it."[2]

The words of other than Japanese writers may not be without some interest. A Christian friend of mine, once an English professor in a Japanese college, wrote to me lately: "I must admit that the Japanese do seem to have attained *without* Christianity a higher status than most Christian

[1] *The Nineteenth Century and After*, February, 1905, art. "Moral Teaching in Japan." Regarding their *native* virtues, see Appendix.

[2] *The Independent Review*, December, 1905, art. "The Religions of Japan."

nations. Indeed, they appear to attain personal and national excellence without religion at all." Again, another Englishman, who has spent a lifetime and occupies a high position in Japan, remarks (in the course of a letter replying to my queries): "There is not the remotest chance of Christianity becoming the religion of the State. For the last two centuries and a half the educated class have adopted the Agnostic ethical system of Confucius, which, once understood and embraced, can never be dislodged by the Christian or any other variety of theologian."

Yet Dr. Boyd Carpenter, Bishop of Ripon, closes his book, *The Witness of the Influence of Christ*, with the familiar assertion of the inseparability of religion and ethics. It is an assertion which, now more than ever, the Churches are reiterating. Why? Is it not because they find that many are beginning to doubt its truth? I fear reiteration will not make it any truer. Only facts will appeal to the man who looks below the surface, and these all tend the other way.

In the *Hibbert Journal* for October, 1905, there is an article contributed by the editor which deserves the earnest attention of all thoughtful men. It is entitled "Moral Supremacy of Christendom." The following quotations from it will suffice to show the far-reaching importance of the questions it raises: "Christendom, as a whole, long accustomed to treat all pagan races as morally inferior to herself, now stands confronted by a non-Christian civilisation, of vast power and splendid promise, whose claim to moral equality, at least, cannot be disregarded, except by those who are morally blind,.....The hold of Christianity upon the peoples of the Western world is rooted in the conviction that *this is the religion*

*which produces the best men.* To a greater degree than is commonly recognised, each Church or sect of Christendom thus derives its confidence from the final court of ethical appeal. Whatever ground be alleged for a given doctrine, whether of Scripture, authority, or reason, the argument would instantly lose its force if it were to appear that the ethical result of denying the doctrine was superior to that which followed its acceptance."

### CRIMINALITY.

To return to the arguments of rational morality. A man may say: "I don't care a bit about this social instinct you tell me of; I don't know that I possess it. It is no use your prating to me about my happiness of mind, and the necessity of my being in harmony with my surroundings. I prefer to gratify the instinct—the passion—that I do feel, regardless of the consequences to others. Of course, I shouldn't like everybody else to do the same. That is the beauty of my scheme, and I am not going to miss my opportunity in the short space of existence you tell me is all that lies before me. If it pleases me to make a beast of myself, I shall do so." All I can say is that a man who really means that this is what he would do, if not deterred by belief, is an unfortunate, with criminal tendencies—is, in fact, of unsound mind. His reasoning, too, is unsound. He must expect others to follow his example, as his argument is that the whole world would become immoral and lawless without belief. He would suffer, therefore, with the rest, and then would be the first, if sane, to co-operate with his fellow-sufferers in putting down lawlessness. The most savage tribe looks after its

own interests according to its lights. A man who disregards the interest of all but himself becomes an Ishmael, an outlaw, a criminal; and, in the approaching Rationalistic age, he will be specially "taken care of," and treated as any other insane person.

What are the causes of criminality? The Devil—man's sinful nature—the Religionist will reply. What does Science reply? Dr. McEwen, of Glasgow, relates in the *Lancet* how a labourer, after falling on his head from a scaffolding, *developed immoral tendencies.* A tumour had formed on his brain. This was successfully removed by trepanning, and *the immoral tendencies disappeared.* Again, Dr. Lydston tells us that Flesch examined the brains of fifty criminals, and found imperfections in all. "Vice and crime," says Dr. Lydston, "will one day be shown more definitely than ever to be a matter to be dealt with by medical science rather than by law."[1] When brain defects (whether inherited or caused by environment) affecting the moral faculties, are universally recognised as the real source of criminal tendencies; when disease of the brain is no longer regarded as a disease of the soul—then, and not till then, will criminality materially diminish. Science will triumphantly succeed where Religion has dismally failed.

The sooner, therefore, criminality is looked upon as a disease of the brain, and dealt with accordingly, the better it will be for the human race. A day will surely come when, as Mr. Wells predicts,[2] "crime and bad lives will be the measure of a State's failure." The modern Theist now admits that it

[1] See p. 221 of Dr. Lydston's book, *The Diseases of Society.*
[2] In his book, *A Modern Utopia*, p. 144. See also Appendix to this work.

is God's pleasure to employ law, and not the suspension of law, to work out His purposes. Why, then, whether we are Theists or Agnostics, should we not study and apply those laws for our moral improvement? Even now we are doing so. Rationalism has taught us that prevention is better than cure, and its great ally, Science, is helping both in the prevention and the cure. But the process will be considerably accelerated when our energies and our fortunes are spent altogether in this direction, instead of being frittered away in futile attempts to obtain the same results by "spiritual" methods.

### OUR AIDS.

Again the supernaturalist may say: "I grant you, for the sake of argument, that, setting aside the ills of 'outrageous fortune,' the secret of happiness lies in obeying the social instinct; but human nature is weak, and requires assistance. How do you propose to replace the aid derived from belief? I am not a Japanese. I am not an Oriental, with an extraordinary power of self-abnegation for the sake of an idea. I am a phlegmatic Englishman, and I am not at all sure that, even if I had had this *Bushido* instilled into me, my character would have been any stronger than it is now after a Christian education." Here let me again repeat that I do not for one moment contend that, if Christianity were true as *now* interpreted by *liberal* theology, or, again, if Theism, with its assurance of a *benevolent* God, were true, that, as Neo-Christians or Theists, we should not find belief helpful in our efforts to lead a moral and therefore innocently happy life; but an agnosticism regarding

all supernatural beliefs appears to be the only possible attitude for an enlightened world, and it is this situation that we have now to face. Is there anything, then, that can in any way take the place of the ethical assistance[1] afforded by belief in God and an after-life?

The answer of Rationalism has already been indicated—it is to the force of environment (in its broadest sense) that we must look in our struggle with hereditary weaknesses. We cannot get rid of our inherited qualities; but we can modify them by changing our environment. If our early education, our early environment, has been neglected, we still have it in our power to remedy, or partly remedy, this unfortunate circumstance by our choice of present environment. The hard case is that of a man so situated that to change his evil environment seems well-nigh impossible. Therefore it is that the reduction of pernicious environments is of paramount importance to the race, and this truth the rationalistic spirit of the age is now forcing to the front. Also, if the individual takes no interest in

[1] It may not be out of place to mention here that various Ethical Societies in England (and her Colonies), Europe, and America are doing all they can to meet the ethical needs of Agnostics, and their efforts deserve far greater support than they have yet received from the wealthy. For this want of sympathy there are many obvious reasons—reasons, fortunately, that will disappear in the near future. It will be urged that the truly pious and honest believer finds prayer of the greatest help towards right conduct, while the unbelieving ethicist is destitute of this aid. I do not propose now to discuss the ethical value of prayer, or consider the causes of its success and failure; but I would ask the reader to refer to my remarks in Chapter VI. on the psychology of prayer. Personally, I am of opinion that the practice of *auto-suggestion* may prove useful to those in need of such assistance, and that one day (let us hope at no distant date) psychical research will lead to the discovery of a complete and scientific method for the toughening of our moral fibres. See also further note in the Appendix.

posterity, and refuses to study the question of heredity, the day will come when the law of the land will see to it that the sins or diseases of the fathers shall *not* be visited upon the children "unto the third and fourth generation." It is the quality, not the quantity, of our children that we have to keep to the forefront.[1] The methods will be simple, if somewhat drastic; but the need to apply them will continue to lessen in proportion as the laws of heredity and environment are better kept in view. "Over the past, represented by our own heredity, we have no control. We cannot change the facts which have made the degenerate, the neurotic, the hysterical, and the criminal; but these are only names for human beings who, by a certain train of causation, have had certain impulses developed and others left fallow or suppressed. A different train of causation will awaken the capabilities to hold these impulses in due check. This future, now represented by the environment, is greatly within our power. Heredity being but the transmitted effects of past environments, we have to make a suitable environment for growing organisms if we wish to mould them to our ideals; and this is the meaning of education."[2]

### THE IMPORTANCE OF A KNOWLEDGE OF THE ORIGIN OF MORALITY.

Finally, it is very necessary that the origin of

[1] Mr. H. G. Wells furnishes us with some novel ideas on this point in his book, *A Modern Utopia*, chap. vii., §§ 2–5. If we cannot prevent degenerates from marrying, at least we can abolish an environment that assists heredity in their production. See also Appendix.

[2] See pp. 25–6 of Stanley de Brath's *The Foundations of Success.*

morality (as indicated by Spencer in his *Data of Ethics*, by Darwin in his *Descent of Man*, by Prince Kropotkin in his *Mutual Aid: A Factor of Evolution*, and by Dr. C. W. Saleeby in his *Evolution: The Master-Key*) should be better understood. Hitherto the question of morality has been dealt with on wrong lines,[1] and this applies to the teaching not only of Christian but also of non-Christian religionists. It applies to the works of those speculative philosophers who have denied the empirical origin of man's moral feeling, and who have had recourse to subtle and unconvincing theories in order to assign a supernatural origin to the moral senses. These thinkers, in attempting to explain the "distinction of man," the "why of existence," and the "aim of nature," set themselves the hopeless task of explaining a process which entails untold suffering upon sentient beings, and in which the modern Rationalist is unable to discover any ethical principle whatsoever.

Too much prominence cannot be given to the later conclusions of modern thought so eloquently set forth by Prince Kropotkin. Much as I appreciate all Mr. S. Laing's writings, and especially, perhaps, the chapter on "Practical Life" with which he closes his admirable work, *Modern Science and Modern Thought*, I cannot agree with him when he says (p. 113 of the R. P. A. Cheap Reprint): "For practical purposes it is comparatively unimportant how this [the moral] standard got there." It is, in my humble opinion,

[1] See Prince Kropotkin's articles in *The Nineteenth Century and After* (August, 1904, and March, 1905), entitled "The Ethical Need of the Present Day" and "The Morality of Nature." Anyone wishing to know why we *must* lead the moral life should not fail to read these instructive articles, and also Dr. Saleeby's *Evolution: The Master-Key*.

very important, for the reasons that are clearly demonstrated by Prince Kropotkin and other modern ethicists. So soon as the Darwinian theory of the origin of morals is fully accepted, great strides in the development of an improved morality will surely follow. In fine, "science, far from destroying the foundations of ethics, as it is so often accused of doing, gives to evolutionist ethics a philosophical certitude where the transcendental thinker had only a vague intuition to rely upon."[1]

### OPINIONS OF ETHICISTS.

Let me now quote some instructive utterances by Rationalists[2]:—

"The foundation of morality is to have done, once and for all, with lying; to give up pretending to believe that for which there is no evidence, and repeating unintelligible propositions about things beyond the possibilities of knowledge. She [Science] knows that the safety of morality lies neither in the adoption of this or that philosophical speculation, nor this or that theological creed, but in a real and living belief in that fixed order of nature which sends social disorganisation upon the track of immorality, as surely as it sends physical disease after physical trespasses. And of that firm and lively faith it is her mission to be priestess."[3] "Theological apologists, who insist that morality will vanish if their dogmas

[1] Prince Kropotkin in *The Nineteenth Century and After.*

[2] "Rationalism may be defined as the mental attitude which unreservedly accepts the supremacy of reason and aims at establishing a system of philosophy and ethics verifiable by experience and independent of all arbitrary assumptions or authority" (from the Memorandum of the Aims and Objects of the Rationalist Press Association).

[3] Closing words of Professor Huxley's essay, *Science and Morals.*

are exploded, would do well to consider the fact that, in the matter of intellectual veracity, science is already a long way ahead of the Churches; and that, in this particular, it is exerting an educational influence on mankind of which the Churches have shown themselves utterly incapable."[1]—HUXLEY.

"A moral life is that form of existence which is based upon obedience to natural and social law..... By long transmission and inheritance of mental and physical qualities a certain moral sense, so to say, has been developed, now called 'conscience,' which suggests acts often amounting to self-sacrifice, and condemns and represses others, pleasant and even profitable to the individual, because detrimental to the race. Altruism and Utilitarianism have come to be so insensibly blended that it is difficult to detect where the one ends and the other begins.....We have attained a natural and instinctive preference for what is good and noble in conduct, irrespective of self-interest, just as we have risen to an instinctive appreciation of fine music and delicate perfume.....The moral life is derived from the universal experience of mankind, approved by the wisdom of the wise, and justified by the fate of the foolish."[2] ["We needs must love the noblest when we see it."]—THE AUTHOR OF "SUPERNATURAL RELIGION."

"The Supernaturalists charge the system of the Rationalists with a lack of any effective motive that can constrain ordinary and average men to live a moral life. 'It is all very well,' they say, 'for your Spinozas, your Stuart Mills, and such like, to affect

[1] Essay entitled "An Episcopal Trilogy," p. 312 of *Essays on Controverted Questions* (Macmillan & Co.).

[2] Art. "Why Live a Moral Life?" in the *Agnostic Annual*, 1895.

independence of supernatural sanctions, because they are exceptional men, and have powers of discernment and will, by which they appropriate to themselves the moral doctrine and practice of Christianity, while they refuse to acknowledge their debt.'.....I daresay I might, with some success, retort the argument of Supernaturalism. 'It is all very well,' I might say, 'for your apostles and saints, for your Augustines and Luthers and Bunyans, to depend on supernatural sanctions, because they are exceptional men, and have powers of imagination which turn shadows into substance.'.....There is such a thing as self-respect; no man likes to feel ashamed of himself. There are very few who are not strongly moved by a desire to see wife and children or parents happy. Such influences as these have far more to do with moulding human life and resisting selfish passion than any fear of hell or desire of heaven, or any philosophical principles. And such influences as these will survive even when open denial of supernatural sanction becomes as general as tacit disbelief is now."[1]—J. ALLANSON PICTON.

"For the mass of mankind two motives serve to direct the main course of ethics. These are Prudence and Sympathy.....Prudence is the first step in morality.....Sympathy did not wait to be called into life by religion. It was born among the brutes..... In the case of man the sympathy which issues first through the natural emotions of family and sex is spread over an ever-widening area by the power of imagination. A greater faculty of entering into the feelings of others goes along with a deeper sensitive-

[1] Art. "Why Live a Moral Life?" in the *Agnostic Annual*, 1905.

ness to their pains and joys. Their experience becomes ours. Our self is blended with theirs. We pity their actual sufferings, and, calling up in imagination the suffering our conduct might entail, we shrink from committing a wrong.....Pity is the characteristic mark of the later ethics."[1]—F. J. GOULD.

"One can say without exaggeration that the most religious times and the most religious peoples, or those in which or among whom the power of the Church has been the strongest, have, generally speaking, been the most immoral. One has evidence enough in the horrors of the Middle Ages, and, if to-day it be otherwise, it is not to religion we owe the change, but to the spread of education and the progress of intelligence.....It is one of the fatalest and most widespread of errors that morality without religion is impossible. It has long been scientifically acknowledged that morality, as such, is far older than religion.....Morality comes only as the consequence and result of the inevitable necessities of social intercourse."[2]—LUDWIG BÜCHNER.

"The religion of the lower orders of Welshmen may be said to be high in the scale, while their morality is decidedly low.....What savage nations have been raised out of their degradation by Christianity?.....I look upon the doctrine of future rewards and punishments as radically bad, and as bad for savages as for civilised men."—ALFRED RUSSEL WALLACE.[3]

"Heaven and hell have no more relation to the

[1] Art. "Why Live a Moral Life?" in the *Agnostic Annual*, 1895.
[2] *Ibid.*
[3] Quoted from his Autobiography, entitled *My Life: A Record of Events and Opinions* (Chapman & Hall).

question than any other punishments. The hell which a thoroughly bad man dreads can only be a hell of physical suffering; and, if he abstains from crime through fear of fire, he is not a good man, but a bad man in chains."[1]—LESLIE STEPHEN.

"Where is the seat of authority for what is moral? This is a very old question. Manu, the Indian law-giver, answers it in four ways: It rests on revelation (*scuti*); it rests on tradition (*smriti*); it rests on the behaviour of good people; and, lastly, it rests on inward satisfaction. I believe that, in the end, the last is the supreme authority."[2]—F. MAX MÜLLER.

"Whatever power the threats of punishment and the promises of reward in an after-life may have had in lawless and superstitious ages, they have now but the smallest effect on conduct; their remoteness exhausts their power, and, moreover, the belief in them is slowly decaying.....All the law and commandments are in the Golden Rule; all ethics in the teaching that, if man be true to himself, he cannot be false to his fellows."[3]—EDWARD CLODD.

"The first step towards the elaboration of a morality which should exercise a lasting influence is to base it upon an ascertained truth.....The function of ethics is not so much even to insist upon the defects of man, and to reproach him with his 'sins,' as to act in the positive direction by appealing to man's best instincts. .....It tells to man that, if he desires to live a life in which all forces—physical, intellectual, and emotional—should find a full exercise, he must, once and for all, abandon the idea that such a life is attainable on the

[1] Art. "Why Live a Moral Life?" in the *Agnostic Annual*, 1895.
[2] *Ibid.*
[3] P. 121 of *The Story of Creation* (R. P. A. Cheap Reprint).

path of disregard for others.....What is wanted now is a new comprehension of morality in its methods, which must be freed from both the transcendental survivals and the narrow conceptions of philistine utilitarianism. The importance of *mutual aid* in the evolution of the animal world and human history may be taken as a positive established scientific truth..... Mutual aid, justice, morality, are thus the consecutive steps of an ascending series, revealed to us by the study of the animal world and man. It is not something imposed from the *outside:* it is an organic necessity which carries in itself its own justification."[1] —PRINCE KROPOTKIN.

"We do not see any convincing reason why morals should be based upon the teaching of a special denomination, in face of the fact that we can be upright and brave without the help of a creed with a God or deities at its other end."[2]—PROFESSOR OKAKURA.

"I regard religion itself as quite unnecessary for a nation's life; science is far above superstition; and what is religion, Buddhism or Christianity, but superstition, and therefore a possible source of weakness to a nation? I do not regret the tendency to freethought and atheism, which is almost universal in Japan, because I do not regard it as a source of danger to the community."[3]—MARQUIS ITO.

"Cardinal Newman once said: 'Give me the children of England, and England shall be *Roman*

[1] *The Nineteenth Century and After*, August, 1904, art. "The Ethical Need of the Present Day."

[2] Quoted from a little volume recently published, entitled *The Japanese Spirit.* (Constable.)

[3] Cited by Mr. L. Gulick, an American missionary organiser, in his work on *The Evolution of the Japanese.*

*Catholic.*' *We* say: 'Put the children of England under the best moral influences, and England shall be righteous.'"[1]—THE MORAL INSTRUCTION LEAGUE.

## NOTE ON SYSTEMATIC MORAL INSTRUCTION.

A Memorial was lately addressed to the Local Education Authorities of the country. Among the signatories are Lord Rosebery, Lord Roberts, Lord Wolseley, Lord Kelvin, the Archbishops of Canterbury and York, a number of bishops, "General" Booth, Dr. Horton, Dr. Campbell, the Vice-Chancellors of the Universities of Oxford and Cambridge, etc. They recommend that the eight or ten years of school life should provide the opportunity, not only for imparting knowledge, but for inculcating those habits of self-restraint, conscientiousness, fidelity, honour, and kindness which are needful alike for individual self-respect and national well-being. (The *Code of Regulations for Public Elementary Schools* [1906] has since appeared. It states emphatically: "Moral Instruction should form an important part of every elementary school curriculum.") Sir Oliver Lodge has urged the same thing in the *Nineteenth Century*. At last, then, it has been influentially recognised that these things are not taught in schools, or, if so, are taught in an indifferent and unsystematic manner. What a reflection upon Christian methods of upbringing hitherto! Unfortunately, coupled with this desire for effective moral training, the signatories of the Memorial express a hope that Bible teaching will be continued. I say "unfortunately," because the ethical value of the Bible is inextricably intertwined with supernatural beliefs that are demonstrably false. Any temporary success of such teaching, while the children are still uninformed of the real nature of the Bible, will be heavily discounted in after years—at a time, too, when assistance from the ethical teaching of childhood will be most needed. It is an unfortunate circumstance that the Church must necessarily be

[1] Quoted from a leaflet of the Moral Instruction League. (See Appendix.)

fearful regarding the separation of belief and morality—must set her face against non-theological moral instruction. It is no use disguising the fact. Her fears are perfectly well founded—such teaching *would* tend to the further spread of unbelief. On the other hand, it is equally clear that, if any temporary harm comes of this spread—a spread which, in any case, cannot be stopped, though it can be delayed—it will be because our children have been taught that religious belief is the chief, if not the only, sanction for the moral life. The Church, in fact, will be directly responsible for the evil. Is it not time, then, for all thoughtful men and women to be up and doing? Is it not time the truth should be told? In the following sections we shall see that this course is advisable on every ground.

## § 3. *Should the Truth be Told?*

*"Wise and prudent conduct demands before all things that we should see the facts as they are; and those are not least among England's helpers who, regardless of consequences, in all ages have taught her children, by using their reason, to distinguish what is false from what is true."*[1]

Presuming that we have come to the conclusion that Christianity is not true, are we to say so, or are we to be silent? A believer, with ideas so advanced that his belief amounts to little more than "a reverent agnosticism" concerning the fundamental dogmas of Christianity, is still able to speak out, because while he destroys he also constructs. He has new interpretations of Christianity to offer us. The unbeliever can offer no such interpretations. He simply believes Christianity to be untrue, and, should he give his reasons, he knows he may persuade others to think so also. He must, therefore, it seems, keep his unbelief

[1] Quoted from p. 507, Vol. II., of *The History of English Rationalism in the Nineteenth Century*, by A. W. Benn (Longmans, Green, and Co., 1906).

to himself, unless he is prepared to show that the destruction of belief will be beneficial. In considering this question of frank avowal of our unbelief, we must not forget that, try as we may to avoid it, we are bound from time to time to find ourselves in a position where we have to choose between telling the truth or telling a lie; while our silence, or any manœuvre with intent to deceive, is one continual evasion of the truth. Is it not time, as John Morley urges,[1] to abandon "those habits of hypocritical conformity and compliance which have filled the air of the England of to-day with gross and obscure mists"? In moral life truth is our guide, so that the arguments for its repression must be irrefutable. Now, if it can be shown that the objections to candour are more imaginary than real, not only are we robbed of the excuse for further concealment, but we are morally bound to fly our true colours openly. Nor is this all. Should it become plain to us that actual good will come of truth-telling, or that the probable good far outweighs the possible evil, it behoves us to take an active part in, or at least to lend our support to, the spread of truth.

### (*a*) "MAGNA EST VERITAS ET PRÆVALEBIT."

One very natural objection of unbelievers, who are not actually disbelievers, is that there may be, after all, some truth in Christianity. We find here every shade of opinion, from that of the man who still hopes that Christianity may be proved true in all essentials, to that of the man who thinks that Christianity may be the symbol of a truth. But, I ask,

[1] In his masterly work, *On Compromise*.

Will not Christianity, if true in any shape or form, benefit by truth-telling? Will it not thereby assume its true form, whatever that may eventually prove to be, and is not that a consummation to be desired? Many believers stoutly maintain that Christianity can be only strengthened by attack; so that, on the face of this assertion, it would appear both justifiable and desirable to take them at their word, and, without more ado, proceed to attack Christianity. Certain it is that, so far, Rationalistic attacks have done inestimable good in disclosing its errors in doctrine and practice. As Mr. Morley caustically remarks, the efforts of the heterodox have taught the Church to be better Christians than they were a hundred years ago. If Christianity, purified in the cleansing fire of modern criticism, be the true faith, and the theory of progressive revelation can be accepted, are not this truer faith and this peculiarly rapid progress of revelation during late years the product of scepticism? It is the sceptics who have succeeded in forcing the Church to reconsider her doctrines and discover new truths, and, wonderful as it may appear, they have thus been God's special instruments in this more perfect revelation of Himself. Why, then, should you hesitate to speak out? Christianity evidently has to be re-stated if it is to survive, and this re-statement must be complete, for on it rests the only chance of reclaiming the unbeliever, of arresting the further spread of infidelity, and of converting the cultured heathen—the only chance of a universal belief in God and Immortality. Of the result you have no cause for fear. If there be a God, He is a God of Truth, and the Truth will prevail.

### (*b*) OBSCURANTISM HAS HAD ITS DAY.

The Rev. V. F. Storr, at the Liverpool Church Congress (1904), advocated telling the truth regarding established facts, and asked: "In how many pulpits are the opening chapters of Genesis frankly treated as legendary? How many teachers in schools, if called upon to give a lesson on the Fall, would make plain to the children that the framework of the story is imaginative? Are not the teachers creating for them the very difficulties which, when they come to mature years, will make shipwreck of their faith?" These remarks were received in dead silence by the audience, and the President was vociferously cheered when he asked: "Are we to tell the children that these narratives are mere fables, with a moral teaching, or, as Dr. Wace says, that they are true and historical, only clothed in an Eastern symbolism? I prefer to stand with Dr. Wace." On the other hand, Dean Farrar advocated a diametrically opposite course. "We must," he said,[1] "vaccinate them [the children] with criticism to save them from the small-pox of scepticism." His successor at Canterbury has, it would appear, a "conscientious objection" to this vaccination; and well he may, for it would be far more likely to promote the disease than to bestow immunity from it.

I should mention that Dr. Wace also said, at the same Church Congress: "If I were on Mr. Blatchford's side, and wanted to attack Christianity, I should desire nothing better than that the results of criticism concerning Genesis, as these results predominate even

[1] See p. 55 of *The Bible and the Child.*

in the most sober critical circles, should be adopted by the Christian Church, because this would afford a means of attacking Christianity with greater force than anything else, since it would enable me to start with this vantage-ground, that all the Jews and all the apostles—I dare not speak of our Lord—were mistaken in their view of God's relation to His own people." Obscurantism is therefore recommended because the purpose is a pious one—namely, to confute the unbeliever and to maintain the Faith. The anti-Christian must be deprived of his vantage-ground by the denial of truth. It is the old, old story of "pious fraud," the mainstay of the Christian Faith. We are to imitate (though in a lesser degree) the practices of the Latin and Greek Churches, and continue to play upon people's credulity and ignorance. We are to understand that pious frauds are still considered legitimate weapons to employ in the defence of Christianity. Surely such weapons should be allowed to fall into disuse for the simple reason—if on no higher grounds—that the spread of education is rendering them obsolete.

The days of obscurantism are numbered. "Many a man in the workshop to-day knows more about the Bible and Church history than many a monk and bishop a few generations ago."[1] The Church of England cannot "shut herself in behind walls of tottering traditions."[2] Christian Fathers can no longer publish their own writings in the names of disciples and apostles in order to insure their acceptance. Evidence against the truth of Christianity can

[1] Bishop Diggle, the President of the Church Congress of 1906, in his opening address.
[2] *Ibid.*

no longer be destroyed or suppressed by persecution. "Miracles" can no longer be worked, except where people are still grossly credulous or ignorant. True it is that passages of the Bible can still be read in church which every educated man knows to be (to use a mild term) unhistorical, and which, to console his conscience, he calls allegorical. True, in our churches, with but few exceptions, the white lie of silence is daily told. But even mild pious frauds of this nature will soon be a thing of the past. The Higher Critics and the advanced school of the Church will see to it. They are beginning to speak out—why should not you?

The obscurantist would do well to take to heart the answer of Bishop Colenso to the clergyman who reproached him with depraving one of his parishioners by criticisms of the Pentateuch. "The blame," he replied, "would be more fittingly attached to the teachers who lead people to rest their faith in God and duty on a foundation of falsehood which every new wave of thought is sweeping away."[1] Shall we, to give a glaring instance of pious obstruction, revert to the time—not many years ago—when the use of anæsthetics in surgery was denounced from the pulpit, on the ground of impiety? I think not. Nowadays one can hardly keep one's countenance in recalling the words of those who seriously, and, as they thought, piously, said that they would rather suffer any pain than "enter the presence of their Maker in a state of intoxication." We no longer listen to those who would forbid us either to taste the

[1] Recorded in *The Life of Frances Power Cobbe, as Told by Herself.* (Sonnenschein.)

fruit of the Tree of Knowledge or to give it to others. Obscurantism, dogma's best friend, is breathing its last. It can therefore no longer be depended upon.

### (*c*) THE EFFECT ON MORALITY.

Anxiety with regard to the effect on morality, private and public, chiefly accounts, no doubt, for the present conspiracy of silence. I have already gone into this question in some detail,[1] and we have seen that belief and morality are not necessarily Siamese twins, and that, when the belief is false, and still more, of course, when it is suspected or known to be false, it is no longer of any possible ethical value, but quite the reverse. Should you demur, I have a question to ask, which is this: Now that, whether we wish it or no, the truth about Christianity is fast leaking out, and, consequently, disbelief is rapidly spreading, how is it that you, how is it that the State, how is it that the majority outside the Church, display so peculiarly little anxiety? I confess I am at a loss to understand, unless it be that you and they have realised that morality is a thing apart from belief, and therefore feel that there is little cause for uneasiness. There is, however, an element of danger, and, temporary though it may be, it is sure, if disregarded, to affect the private and public morality of our own times.

### (*d*) THE REAL DANGER.

The real danger lurks, where least suspected, in the very method which you advocate as the safest—the method of a gradual infiltration. In many matters such a method is undoubtedly sound. A

[1] See § 3 of the last Chapter and § 2 of the present.

reformation involving a complete revolution in opinions is best carried out gradually and tentatively, and, in this respect, nature's slow processes of evolution provide a useful lesson for the too ardent reformer. I do not suggest a cataclysm, or suppose it possible. But I do say that your infiltration process must be carefully watched and tended, although a policy of masterly inactivity and *laissez-faire* may appeal to you as the easiest; I do say with Mr. Trevelyan that "true opinions do not spread always, and of their own force; but sometimes, and only by dint of courageous avowal";[1] I do say that in this particular instance it is absolutely necessary that, side by side with a knowledge of the untruth of the Christian religion, there should be inculcated a knowledge of the true origin and need of morality; I do say that the infiltration process need not and ought not to be prolonged indefinitely, and that insincerity of any kind affects character banefully; I do say that you should not allow your children to be taught a false belief and a false basis of morality. This conspiracy of silence is as mistaken and mischievous as that by which boys and girls are allowed to find out for themselves what they should have had properly put to them by their parents and guardians. When the Church teaching, when the dogmas contained in the Thirty-nine Articles of Religion, are removed, the rational teaching must take its place *at once*.

### (*e*) THE CONSOLATIONS OF BELIEF, AND THE DISTRESS WE MAY CAUSE BY OUR CANDOUR.

We cannot stop to inquire how this or that private

[1] P. 392 of *The Independent Review*, December, 1904.

interest will suffer when the theological mist has been dispelled. When machinery was invented—or, again, when slavery was abolished—enormous interests were affected. Such things will always adjust themselves. There is one difficulty, however, which we all feel very strongly, and which cannot be passed over lightly. We have to consider the distress of mind which the truth will cause to those who still firmly believe, and for whom their religion is so great a consolation that to be robbed of it would make life objectless—a dreary desert of despair. Have we, then, any right to disturb people's belief, and to lacerate their feelings? It would almost appear, as Mr. Winwood Reade remarks, that "we can do nothing that is exclusively and absolutely good. *Le genre humain n'est pas placé entre le bien et le mal, mais entre le mal et le pire.*" Just as multitudes of martyrs are now suffering in unhappy Russia for the sake of its eventual reform, just as throughout history mankind owe their elevation to misfortune and their happiness to misery, so here, also, it seems as if the elevation and happiness in store for mankind after their liberation from superstition can only be achieved through suffering. The revolution will be bloodless, but it cannot be altogether tearless. Let us see whether the mental anguish will be as great as we imagine, and also whether it is not in the power of each one of us to adopt a line of conduct which will tend towards a vast reduction in the number of those who must pass through the vale of tears.

Are you and I any unhappier than the believer? Many of us have gone through an ordeal more or less severe before finally relinquishing our cherished beliefs. I will speak of that presently. But are we

*now* any less happy than our fellows who are believers? Except for the unhappiness which our outspoken confession of belief may have brought upon us, surrounded as we are by believers and professing believers, I think we can, with confidence, say we are not; while this possible cause of unhappiness is precisely the one which will disappear as soon as the vast multitude of unbelievers agree to tell the truth. No longer then shall we seem, as now, to be in a minority. Very good. We are, or should be, quite as happy as believers; may we not suppose that, after the effect of a rude awakening from a beautiful dream has passed off, the convert to unbelief will settle down into the same condition of mind as ourselves? We are free from anxiety regarding the terrible fate that some of our Christian brethren still see fit to hold over us; but in place of their anxiety concerning an eternal after-life, which may be blissful or may be gruesome, the worst we expect is an eternal peace—an undisturbed sleep, such as we hope for every night when we retire to rest.

After life's fitful fever he sleeps well.

We are Agnostics, and, though some may preserve an agnosticism concerning the continuance of consciousness after death, we are all of us resigned to the inevitable.

And if there be no meeting past the grave,
If all is darkness, silence, yet 'tis rest;
Be not afraid, ye waiting hearts that weep,
For God still "giveth his belovèd sleep,"
And if an endless sleep He wills, so best.[1]

Can we state it as our honest opinion that the

[1] *Browning's Funeral*, a poem by Mrs. Huxley. The last three lines were inscribed, at Prof. Huxley's request, upon his grave-stone (in St. Marylebone Cemetery, East Finchley).

consolations of belief enter into the every-day life of the average man, influencing thereby his happiness? We cannot. Only on rare occasions, in times of bereavement, or in time of his own approaching death, will he turn to his belief for consolation: Does he obtain then the consolation he looks for? Again the answer must be in the negative. Here and there we come across examples of a happy resignation such as we should expect to find; but usually it is far otherwise. No one nurses his grief longer than the average Christian; no one is more unwilling to die—he is really more anxious to live than Hindoo, Parsee, Mohammedan, or Buddhist believer, or Japanese Agnostic. Whether it be that Agnosticism engenders a spirit of resignation, it is difficult to say; but the fact remains that no one accepts the ills of life more cheerfully, no one meets his death more bravely, than the average Agnostic. How often one hears of the deaths of unbelievers quite as beautiful in their serene calm as those of devout believers. To give examples recently before the public, we have the heart-stirring accounts of the last moments of two well-known Agnostics, the late Sir Leslie Stephen, the author of *An Agnostic's Apology*, and the late George Jacob Holyoake, the founder of Secularism. These may be exceptional cases; but such are exceptional, also, among believers. According as a man is possessed of self-control, or is naturally fearless or resigned, so will his conduct or feelings be affected. We are speaking, mind you, of averages; and I maintain that bereavements and death are met by the average Agnostic with as much resignation as by the average Christian who has religious consolation to fall back upon.

The fear of death supplies the chief motive for religion. Even the emotion called forth by the death of a friend is not solely the feeling of the loss. It is partly because death has been brought very near to us. Now, as the consolation afforded by religion in our last hours is continually held up to us by the priest as a reward for belief, one would expect to find that occasions where this consolation was unnecessary would be few and far between. It is, however, quite the reverse. Eliminating the cases of sudden death, how seldom are these consolations of utility? Inquire, if you doubt, from any medical man what are his experiences among the dying; how many are not even aware that they are dying; how many are too much taken up with their physical sufferings, and too anxious to be relieved from them, to think of anything else; how many die in a space of time so brief, reckoning from the moment when they are first made aware of their dying condition, that the case is practically one of sudden death; how many are unconscious from the time when their life is first in danger; how many have the knowledge of their approaching death carefully concealed from them by kind-hearted doctors and relations, albeit both the patient and his attendants say they believe in a supremely happy existence after death? Far more often than not the religious consolation so frequently and solemnly held up to us by the priest as an inducement to believe is never enjoyed. Does it not furnish a damaging commentary on one of the strongest arguments for belief —the argument from religious consolation?

Taking these facts into consideration, we find ourselves able to approach the question of disturbing

belief with a somewhat lighter heart. Still, we have to remember that these hopes and fears, sedulously implanted by the Church, have taken deep root. Could we be sure of impressing believers with our own convictions concerning the consolations of religion, all would be well; but we cannot be sure. Here lies the crux. The idea that they are deriving, and will derive, consolation when the dread moment is at hand has become far too fixed for painless extraction. You may only succeed in partially divesting them of their belief, making them thoroughly miserable to no purpose; or, if you do succeed, it may only be after you have put them to considerable mental distress. What is to be done, then? It is a hard question. Feeling this, we give the matter up in despair, and remain silent. And so the truth which we might have spread, each one of us in his own circle, remains unspoken.

Worse still, the untruth is perpetuated by permitting our children to be brought up in the false beliefs of our believing friends. This, at least, should make us pause and reflect. Are we justified in keeping silence? Are we justified in making no effort to save the future generation from mental distress, or from what is far worse, a demoralising indifference? The dilemma is great, but that is no reason for shirking it. It must be faced, and the *pros* and *cons* carefully weighed. Is there, haply, no middle course that we may steer? We should not unnecessarily cause distress to the aged who have, all their days, cherished this belief, who have arrived at a time of life when ideas are not easily changed, and who feel that that life is now drawing to a close, and that they now more than ever require the consolation they have built their hopes upon. We should spare their feelings all we can;

but we must, so it seems to me, put both them and ourselves to such distress as may arise from telling them plainly, when absolutely necessary, that we do not believe in the truth of Christianity, and do not think it right to bring up our children to what we consider is a false belief. We have seen that religious tolerance is the growing spirit of the age, that some of our greatest divines extol[1] the virtues of the Agnostic, and condemn[2] obscurantism and the *odium theologicum*. Shall we then, after all, in these days, cause so very much distress by our confessions of unbelief? As a rule, I think we shall not.

### (*f*) CAN WE ALTER PEOPLE'S BELIEFS?

Another objection to "speaking out" is that we can never alter people's beliefs. Many well-known Agnostics still hold this opinion. In his essay, "The Religion of All Sensible Men," Sir Leslie Stephen expresses this opinion in the following words: "I do not wish to underrate modern progress; but surely there is something grotesque in the hypothesis that the average shopkeeper or artisan of the present day is too clever to believe in the creeds of his forefathers. I fancy that no one has yet ascertained that the brain of to-day is more capacious than the brains of the contemporaries of Cæsar or St. Paul.....Can you pierce his [the intelligent citizen's] armour of stolid indifference by arguments about the principle of evolution and the survival of the fittest?.....The improbability that ancient creeds should simply survive must, therefore, depend upon other conditions than the increase of the average intelligence.....I

[1] See Chapter I., p. 30. [2] See Appendix.

would not conceal my own views, but neither would I feel anxious to thrust them upon others; and for the very simple reason that conversion appears to me to be an absurdity. You cannot change a man's thoughts about things as you can change the books in his library."[1] With all due respect to the late Sir Leslie Stephen, I contend that there is one gigantic fallacy underlying this argument. He forgets, or appears to forget, that beliefs are built upon premises, the errors in which one may be able to demonstrate absolutely without having to enter into learned dissertations on the principle of evolution. He declares that he does not wish to underrate, but he certainly does underrate, modern progress. Surely the average shopkeeper or artisan of the present day is capable of understanding that practically nothing is left of the foundations upon which his forefathers built their beliefs; that they have crumbled away under the influence of a knowledge that was not in the possession of the contemporaries of Cæsar or St. Paul? "The laws of thought," as Herbert Spencer says, "are everywhere the same, and the ideas of a rational being are, under the conditions in which they occur, rational."[2] It is ignorance, coupled with superstition, that is at the root of all the different beliefs of mankind. Superstition may remain, though even this may be questioned, considering that people brought up from their childhood as Agnostics are wholly devoid of any superstitious or so-called religious instinct. Ignorance can in any case be dispelled, and if this does not actually destroy supernatural

[1] *An Agnostic's Apology*, pp. 131, 133,-138, of the R. P. A. Reprint.
[2] Spencer's *Principles of Sociology*, p. 98, "The Data of Sociology."

beliefs, it will at least modify them. Even the working man will not remain satisfied with a theology which maintains the necessity for a foundation of facts, and yet is unable to prove them. Therefore, confident of the utility, let us unravel all that is clearly false in belief, and disseminate the result of our investigations among our fellows. In this way, men who are in all essentials seeking the same goal may be led to pursue, if not the same path, yet at least convergent paths. The common sophisms that it is useless to inquire too deeply into beliefs, since you will never arrive at the absolute truth, and that you will never get two men to think alike, account for much of the prevalent indifference. Absolute truth may always remain beyond the ken of man; but that is no reason why he should not go on trying to get as near it as possible, and the first step is the elimination of untruth.

### (g) CAN BELIEFS BE USEFUL THOUGH FALSE?

It is strange to find non-Christians arguing that the persistence of the Christian belief is a sign of its utility; it is no more so than it is of its truth. Christianity did not make good men what they are, but good men have made Christianity what it is. Besides, a false belief cannot possibly serve a good purpose after its real character has become known. Mr. Fielding urges[1] that whatever exists, whatever persists, does so because it fills a want, because it is of use. He points his argument by alluding to the fact that when anything is useless it atrophies, and he instances how the snake and the whale have lost their legs, human kind their hairy skin and keener sense

[1] In his book, *The Hearts of Men.*

of smell, and so on. In this simile he is making an assertion which begs the question. He assumes that supernatural belief is not an atrophied organ; the Rationalist contends that it is, and that it has been proved to be so. Belief, indeed, is strikingly analogous to an organ which, owing to its having no further useful purpose, has atrophied and become rudimentary. It may have served some purpose in bygone ages; but now, in its present state, it is a source of weakness, like the splint bone of a horse—or rather of danger, like the vermiform appendage of man. The analogy, fortunately, does not hold good in every respect, for a false belief is an appendage of human nature which can be safely, though perhaps not always painlessly, removed. Indeed, it is an open question whether all religion (in its theological sense) is not "an unessential quality which has been mechanically attached to it, and which, consequently, it may at any time throw off without experiencing any serious loss."[1]

### (*h*) IS A NEW RELIGION[2] REQUIRED?

If the latter be a correct estimate of the place religion occupies in man's nature, it furnishes a reply to one of the objections to Agnostic propaganda—the objection that, before we discard an existing belief, we must be prepared to substitute a new belief in its

[1] See art. "Is Man by Nature Religious?" by H. Dundas, in *The Agnostic Annual* for 1906.

[2] We are speaking now, remember, of a religion such as the Christian faith, one involving a belief in the supernatural, and not of religion as Professor Huxley defined it—"a reverence and love for the ethical ideal, and the desire to realise that ideal in life." We are not speaking of a mere ethical "binding" between man and man, of a religion free from all theology, such as Comte's "Positivism."

place. It is this objection that has given rise to those speculative philosophies which the common sense of the vast majority has rightly decided are unsatisfactory; a decision that the Church has not unnaturally seized upon as a triumphant vindication of the truth of Christianity.

Against this objection to militant Rationalism, this plea for silence, I may be permitted to enter my protest in the weighty words of a well-known writer. "It is alleged," says the author of *Supernatural Religion*, "that, before existing belief is disturbed, the iconoclast is bound to provide a substitute for the shattered idol. To this we may reply that speech or silence does not alter the reality of things. The recognition of truth cannot be made dependent on consequences, or be trammelled by considerations of spurious expediency. Its declaration in a serious and suitable manner to those who are capable of judging can never be premature. Its suppression cannot be effectual, and is only a humiliating compromise with conscious imposture. In so far as morality is concerned, belief in a system of future rewards and punishments, although of an intensely degraded character, may, to a certain extent, have promoted observance of the letter of the law in darker ages, and even in our own times; but it may, we think, be shown that education and civilisation have done infinitely more to enforce its spirit. How far Christianity has promoted education and civilisation we shall not here venture adequately to discuss. We may emphatically assert, however, that whatever beneficial effect Christianity has produced has been due, not to its supernatural dogmas, but to its simple morality. Dogmatic theology, on the contrary, has retarded education and

impeded science.....Even now the friction of theological resistance is a constant waste of intellectual power.....The choice of a noble life is no longer a theological question, and ecclesiastical patents of truth and uprightness have finally expired. Morality, which has ever changed its complexion and modified its injunctions according to social requirements, will necessarily be enforced as part of human evolution, and is not dependent on religious terrorism or superstitious persuasion. If we are disposed to say: *Cui bono?* and only practise morality, or be ruled by right principles, to gain a heaven or escape a hell, there is nothing lost, for such a grudging and calculated morality is merely a spurious imitation which can as well be produced by social compulsion."[1] "If," as George Eliot once pithily remarked, "you feel no motive to common morality but a criminal bar in heaven, you are decidedly a man for the police on earth to keep their eye upon."

### (*i*) WHY BE SO IMPATIENT OF ERROR?

There is one more argument against militant Rationalism which demands our attention. "Why should we be so impatient of error?" asks Sir Leslie Stephen. "The enormous majority of the race has, on any hypothesis, been plunged in superstitions of various kinds, and, on the whole, it has found that it could thrive and be decently happy and contented in its ignorance. Science declines to accept catastrophes; and no catastrophe would be more startling than a sudden dispersal of the mists that have obscured the human intelligence for so many

[1] Quoted from pp. 169–171 of *A Reply to Dr. Lightfoot's Essays*.

ages. If they grow a little thinner in our time, we may well be content; but is it not childish to be impatient about the rate of development of these vast secular [age-long] processes? Why be in such a hurry to 'change the errors of the Church of Rome for those of the Church of the Future'?"[1] I hope I have already answered this question to the satisfaction of some at least of my readers. I have shown that there is a very real danger in further concealment—in keeping up the farce. But let this pass. The reason why we should be impatient of error—why the truth should be told—is that the elimination of error will usher in an era of greater happiness.

In order that we may the more clearly perceive this, I shall now conclude this book with a rapid survey of the arguments for Rationalism.

### § 4. *The Outlook.*

When Rationalism reigns supreme,—

1. Morality will be founded on a firm basis. Its origin and necessity being better understood, it will also be better practised, whether in commerce, in politics, or in our social relations—*i.e.*, both in our public and in our private conduct. Also the present atmosphere of religious insincerity will be cleared. Relieved of this tempation to deceive our neighbour and even ourselves, our moral fibre will be strengthened, and we shall be far less likely to be hypocrites in other matters.

2. Social evils will stand a better chance of being redressed.

3. All religious intolerance will disappear once and for all.

[1] *An Agnostic's Apology*, p. 137.

4. An era of peace and happiness may at last be realised, because the methods of its attainment will be scientific and rational. We shall have recognised the fact that a gospel which proclaims a sword and eternal damnation cannot at the same time be a gospel of good tidings, cannot bring "Peace on earth, goodwill towards men."

It may be said that such optimism is absurd, but is it really so?

*Morality.*—Have we not seen[1] that morality can be taught apart from belief, and, indeed, that it is better so taught? May we not reasonably expect, therefore, that morality will advance side by side with Rationalism? In the famous words of Kant, "The death of dogma is the birth of morals." Our moral progress has not been checked by the machinations of devils, but rather by our belief in such personages. Also by our ignorance—ignorance of the origin and purpose of morality, ignorance of the true causes of immorality, ignorance of the laws of heredity and environment. Science is the good fairy who will assist moral weaklings, and reduce their numbers in succeeding generations. Supernatural religion was perhaps a phase through which humanity had to grope towards the light of reason and knowledge. "But we are now facing the dawn of that better and happier day when piety shall be confined within the sphere of the natural, when morals shall be looked upon and cultivated as essential conditions of a truly blessed social life, and when all mankind shall aim, not at imaginary happiness in a purely imaginary realm, but at real prosperity in a profoundly real

[1] In Chap. VII., pp. 311, 315-16, and in Chap. VIII., § 2 and § 3 (3) and (4).

world. This would be the exaltation, not destruction, of morality; the glorification, not annihilation, of the sense of responsibility; the enthronement, not repudiation, of the joy of altruistic service."[1]

*Social Problems.*—Broad-minded divines are now exalting the service of man as it has never before been exalted. "Serve men," they say, "and you will find God. Help men, and Christ is here."[2] "The test of Christianity is," Canon Wilson informs us, "the resolve and the power of Christians to solve social problems. If the Bible inspires Christians with the zeal and the wisdom and the love needed for this task, no one will dispute its claims to be verily 'the Word of God.'"[3] This inspiration to improve the lot of our fellow-creatures furnishes, we are told, the final test of the Bible's truth. We are entitled to ask, therefore, How comes it that the inspiration has hitherto so signally failed to manifest itself, and that it only appears now when the aspirations of the democracy can no longer be disregarded? To give an example from history, did not slavery flourish side by side with the Christian Church?[4] Was it not abolished only when the further development of humanitarian principles caused men's hearts to rebel against its cruelty and injustice?

The Church is at last devoting more attention to social evils and to the removal of their causes. What has taught her this duty if it be not the

[1] Quoted from p. 27 of *The Agnostic Annual* for 1906.

[2] Canon Scott Holland, in a sermon preached in St. Paul's Cathedral, May, 1906.

[3] These are the concluding words of a lecture delivered in the Central Hall, Manchester. The lecture is incorporated with others in a book entitled *Is Christianity True?* (Charles H. Kelly, 26, Paternoster Row, E.C.; 6d.).

[4] See Appendix.

growing spirit of Rationalism?[1] The Church has been forced, as it were, to keep pace with the rise of Rationalism. It is her only chance of prolonging her existence. Her new attitude in this respect will undoubtedly be the means of confusing the issue—the truth of Christianity—for some years to come. Therefore it is that, while thankful for the improvement, it is our bounden duty to expose the real truth of the matter—to see that Rationalism is not robbed of its due meed of praise, that the merit of the improvement is ascribed to its proper source.

Also we are to see that the process of improvement is not delayed. Undoubtedly the progress of Rationalism will ultimately involve important changes in political institutions and philosophic theories; but it is the cure of social evils which cannot be wrought too soon. In proportion as we accept the natural and reject the supernatural diagnosis of social diseases so shall we alleviate and possibly cure them.

*Religious Tolerance.*—Have we not seen that religious intolerance has been the evil genius which throughout the history of Christianity has been an enemy of progress and a lively cause of strife and misery? "The Christian Church has been more cruel and shed more human blood than any other Church or institution in the world. Let the Jew alone bear witness among the crowd of victims."[2] Also, Christians, in the course of their intestine dissensions, have

[1] This view is confirmed by such standard works as Lecky's *Rise and Influence of Rationalism in Europe*, Buckle's *History of Civilisation in England*, Robertson's *Short History of Freethought*, and Benn's *History of Rationalism in the Nineteenth Century*.

[2] Quoted from a sermon preached by the Rev. Charles Voysey at the Theistic Church, October 22nd, 1905. See also Appendix.

inflicted far greater severities on each other than they have ever experienced from the zeal of infidels.[1]

> Christians have burnt each other, quite persuaded
> That all the Apostles would have done as they did.

To-day, despite the rise and influence of Rationalism in Europe, "racial and religious prejudice are certainly present among us, and they form a latent source of cruelty and injustice which can at any time, if we are weak enough or wicked enough to give it free play, stain the land with the most amazing oppressions."[2] Religious animus, even in a country priding itself on its tolerant spirit, has by no means burnt itself out. Do we not see it flaring up again in the "War of the Kirks," the Education controversy, and the arguments for the retention of the Athanasian Creed?

It is necessary, as Buckle observes,[3] that men should learn to doubt, before they begin to tolerate; and that they should recognise the fallibility of their own opinions, before they respect the opinions of their opponents. We may never entirely agree on questions that are for the present at least shrouded in mystery; but, though the old adage, "*Quot homines, tot sententiæ*," may remain true for all time, wide differences of opinion will disappear, and with them the *odium theologicum*. There can only be intolerance where belief is dogmatic, and *that* the religion of the future will never be. The uncertainty, the reasons why others may not be able to accept this or that philosophic speculation, will be recognised.

[1] See Gibbon's *Rome*, p. 257, vol. ii. (ed. 1809).

[2] This warning was pronounced by Canon Henson on November 16th, 1905, when commenting, in St. Paul's Cathedral, upon the Russian atrocities.

[3] P. 352, Vol. I., of his *History of Civilisation in England* (Longmans, Green, & Co.; 1891).

If any discoveries await us, we are sure, at all events, that they will not confirm a dogma that would consign the greater portion of the human race to unspeakable and eternal torment; they will not confirm Christ's description of the Last Judgment, when the Son of Man is to say: "Depart from me, ye cursed, into *everlasting* fire, prepared for the Devil and his angels." It is the fashion nowadays for Latitudinarians to explain away everything that appears too incongruous or vindictive, and the word "everlasting" is said to be a mistranslation; but the meaning of one at least of the sayings attributed to Jesus is only too clear: "Many are called, but few are chosen" (Matt. xxii. 14.) What, then, is to become of the many? If we are to believe the "Word of God," their awful fate, temporary or otherwise, is certain—"Whosoever was not found written in the book of life was cast into the lake of fire" (Rev. xx. 15); or again, "And shall cast them into a furnace of fire: there shall be wailing and gnashing of teeth" (Matt. xiii. 42). It is cruel doctrines of this kind that have arrested the growth of love and pity, and Rationalism is therefore the sworn enemy of such doctrines, as well as of the religious intolerance which springs from them.

*Peace.*[1]—In an address by the late Archbishop of Canterbury, when Bishop of London, delivered at the Polytechnic, Regent Street,[2] we are presented with an argument of Christian apologetics, the weight of which rests upon the presumption that Christ did not wish the Church to begin with any bloodshed! "It is sometimes questioned," said Dr. Temple, "by

[1] See also Chap. VII., p. 281, note.
[2] On Sunday, April 13th, 1890.

those who would throw discredit upon the narrative, that our Lord tells them [the disciples] to go into Galilee, and yet He intended to see them that evening. But, the whole thing is perfectly clear to those who consider the circumstances. Our Lord appeared to them in the evening, and there can be no doubt that He intended to do so even when He told these women that they were to desire all the disciples to go down into Galilee. But it was of great importance that there should be no gathering of the disciples in Jerusalem, because the inevitable result would have been an alarm on the part of the Jews, and Pontius Pilate would have been compelled, in order to keep the city perfectly quiet, to disperse such an assembly by force; and it is likely enough that the Church would have begun with bloodshed. But our Lord did not choose to have any such beginning. He told them all to go into Galilee." Are there any grounds for this presumption, any grounds for presuming that God ever wishes to prevent bloodshed? None whatever from a study of history. None whatever from a study of the Bible. None whatever from a study of Christ's own words: "Think not that I am come to send peace on earth; I came not to send peace, but a sword."

Look at the present day! "We live in a time," exclaims the Kaiser,[1] "in which every young German capable of bearing arms must be ready to step forward for his Fatherland." "The signs of the times make it the duty of the nation to strengthen its defences against unrighteous attacks."[2] "History, viewed as

[1] At a gala banquet at Dresden, October 25th, 1905.

[2] Taken from the emperor's speech at the opening of the Reichstag, November 28th, 1905. N.B.—Christian nations distrust one another's

a whole," says Major Stewart Murray,[1] warningly, "is nothing but a succession of struggles for existence among rival nations, in which, in the long run, only the strong armed survive." Similar notes of warning are echoing and re-echoing through the length and breadth of Christendom. Is this no reflection upon Christianity's power for good? Look at the picture! Christian nations all armed to the teeth, with their "powder dry" and their "swords keen," each distrustful of the other, each ready to spring at the other's throat.

What has the Rationalist to say to this state of things? What remedy does he propose to apply? The prophets foretell that we can look forward to the abolition of war only when the engines of destruction—flying ships armed with weapons of death, for example—are of so fearful a nature that it will at last be brought home to mortals that this clumsy and barbarous machine for settling disputes is too absurd, too suicidal for further employment. But need we wait long weary years, burdened with the thousand and one curses of war and militarism,[2] till this supreme horror has been invented?

In the resolution adopted at the Fourteenth Peace

righteousness even when the State and the Church are united and the rulers are defenders of the Faith. It may be noted also that at the swearing-in of the recruits of the Potsdam garrison on November 14th, 1905, they were told to make the Crucifix their Generalissimo!

[1] In his book, *The Peace of the Anglo-Saxons*, with an Introduction by Field-Marshal Earl Roberts, K.G. (Watts & Co.) Observations suggested by this warning will be found in the Appendix.

[2] Apart from the extra burden on the workers, does the Church, I wonder, ever thoroughly realise the inevitable effect on public morality of keeping a large body of men from living a normal domestic life? Does she realise that diseases hurtful to the race are more prevalent than ever, and that nowadays prostitution has spread from the garrison towns to the villages? Does she realise that her "purity" campaigns fail to strike at the root of the evil?

Congress[1] we find the following stirring appeal: "We are beginning to understand that the rights of the citizen within the State can only be fully respected when, by the establishment of international juridical order, absolute security shall be obtained for all nations. The demand for this international security is becoming daily more urgent, on the one hand because modern progress binds together millions of the most diverse interests, on the other hand because the stream of democracy, or what it would be more proper to call the aspirations of the masses of the people after happiness, is rising continually in an immense and irresistible flood. International security can only be assured by federation; so federation will come about, for it is indispensable as liberty to the citizen, as air to the lungs. But it behoves us to see that it comes before we are laid in the tomb. What we ought to labour for with an unresting ardour is that federation should be accomplished while we are yet alive, so that we may not be thwarted of the legitimate share of happiness that belongs to us here below." Yes, this strikes the right chord; but before the hopes of these peace enthusiasts can be fulfilled Rationalism must have advanced considerably further than it has up to the present. At the third National Peace Congress held at Birmingham on June 13th and 14th, 1906, the opinion was expressed that the King and the working classes were already on the side of peace, and it only remained, therefore, to *convert the Church* and the middle classes. How are we to set about their conversion? Even if we could persuade the Church that war was not an essential to

[1] Held in Lucerne on September 19th–23rd, 1905.

the welfare of nations, we could hardly expect her to agree with us at present either as to the cause or the cure of the evil. The prime cause of war is Nature's cruel law, the "struggle for existence"; and the Rationalist's proposals for its alleviation run counter to the teachings of the Church. For this among other cogent reasons, I conceive that it behoves us to see that the truth about Christianity be known "before we are laid in the tomb," and that "what we ought to labour for with an unresting ardour" is that this "should be accomplished while we are yet alive, so that we may not be thwarted of the legitimate share of happiness that belongs to us here below."

The close association of war and religion has never ceased to act for the injury of mankind. The "Lord of Hosts," the "Lord mighty in battle," is expected to take interest in bloodshed rather than in the pursuits of peace, and to be always ready to join in the fray—to fight for His People; both sides, be it remembered, claiming His assistance. True Christianity owns as its Master a Prince of Peace; but in no particular has its failure in practice been more marked than in its impotency to carry out this, one of its chief missions. Why? Apart from religion being frequently the actual occasion of the strife,[1] is it not because it has always meddled in politics, always supported rulers in their ambitions, in their land-hunger? Is it not because religion has too often submitted to be "a 'kept' priest to bless or ban as the passion or self-interest of its employer dictated?"[2]

[1] See Appendix.

[2] See Mr. (now the Right Hon.) Augustine Birrell's suggestive article, "Patriotism and Christianity," in the *Contemporary Review*, February, 1905.

It is as futile as it is insincere for a Tsar[1] to preach peace, when he, or rather his counsellors, are imbued with a hunger for other people's property, and, hypocrites that they are, hide their real motives under the cloak of religion, calling it, forsooth, the spreading of a Christian civilisation. Every Rationalist, every Freethinker, is an honest advocate of peace.[2] He is not so irrational, so immoral I might say, as to propose the settlement of disputes by arbitration, and at the same time to entertain nefarious projects calculated to render this method impracticable. So long as Christian nations remain unmindful of the Tenth Commandment, he acknowledges with sorrow that we must continue armed and ready to do battle; but he looks forward with confidence to the day when there will be such an overwhelming body of men earnestly and sincerely desirous of peace that war will be impossible, simply because the preponderating voice of each and every nation will be against it—will "seek peace and ensue it." He anticipates a time when men will realise that they are not only citizens of this or that country, but fellow citizens also on the same planet.

## § 5. *Concluding Remarks.*

An eminent theologian tells us: "Reason is the only faculty we have wherewith to judge concerning anything, even Revelation itself."[3] How is it, then, that Religionist and Rationalist arrive at such contrary conclusions? The explanation is simple enough: the Religionist trusts, the Rationalist distrusts, his

[1] The Tsar is probably sincere in his professions, and is the helpless tool of his advisers. Can we make the same excuse for another potentate—for him of the "mailed fist"?

[2] See Appendix.

[3] Butler, *Analogy*, pt. ii., 3.

emotions. Which is in the right? The survival of religious belief will largely depend upon the view men may ultimately take upon this question. Whether religion be no more than "morality touched by emotion," as Matthew Arnold defines it,[1] or whether all religions are only different ways of expressing a reality which transcends experience and correct expression, we cannot, on that account, accept dogmas that are untrue; we cannot pretend that a supernatural revelation has been vouchsafed to us. We may surmise, as Sir Henry Thompson supposed, that the "eternal and infinite energy behind phenomena" is what we call "God"; but we have to admit that this God is an unknown God, and that all attempts to unravel the mystery that surrounds our own fate are the merest guesses in the dark. Does a surmise—a belief if you will have it so—of this kind afford any religious satisfaction? If this Eternal Energy possesses what we should call a mind, can we worship a Supreme Intelligence

> "Which stoops not either to bless or ban,
> Weaving the woof of an endless plan"?

Can we worship the Unknown? Can we, like the Athenians of old, erect altars to the Unknown God? I trow not. The age of ignorance and superstition is slowly, but none the less surely, passing away, never again to return.

Sir Oliver Lodge believes[2] in "the ultimate intelligibility of the universe," and with this opinion many of us will agree. Perhaps our present brains may require considerable improvement before we can grasp

[1] In *Literature and Dogma*. See p. 21 of the R. P. A. Reprint.
[2] See p. 183 of *The Hibbert Journal*, October, 1905.

the deepest things by their aid, or perhaps they will suffice as they are, and only a further acquisition of knowledge may be required. In any case, one sees no reason why, because we have no acceptable theory of life or of death now, we must therefore be equally ignorant many centuries, or even a single century, hence. On the other hand, it is, of course, quite possible that these mysteries may remain for ever unexplained. It may transpire that Haeckel's assumption of a monism in the physical world, and his identification of vital force with ordinary physical and chemical forces, are incorrect. It may transpire that Professor le Conte was wrong in regarding vital force as just so much withdrawn from the general fund of chemical and physical forces. Radio-activity and the cyanic theory[1] may not furnish a satisfactory solution of the problem of the first appearance of life upon this globe. But one thing, at all events, our present knowledge seems clearly to indicate: the solution of the problem cannot be in accord with the Christian dogmas. Should the secrets of our existence still lie concealed in the womb of time, their birth will be the death, not the renascence, of the dying creeds of to-day.

Meanwhile our present course is clearly defined: we should search out and expose all *false* premises of belief. Only in this way can we hope to arrive a little nearer to the ultimate truth. Also, what is of much greater consequence, when all that is demonstrably untrue in the world's beliefs has been pointed out and acknowledged, believers and unbelievers will

[1] Compounds of cyanogen have a close resemblance to living matter. As cyanogen is only produced at an intense heat, it is surmised that the living substance may have been produced once and for all when the earth was incandescent.

be in far better accord concerning all that is vital to the well-being of the human race. "We cannot," as Mr. Trevelyan pertinently remarks,[1] "alter the nature of the Unknown by conceiving it to be other than that which it is; but we can get a wrong basis for ethics, and a false sentimental outlook on everything, by reason of false beliefs."

By all means let those who can, continue to cherish the "larger hope"—why should they not, while all is unknown?—and let the metaphysicians continue to translate their wishes and aspirations into philosophical language; but the guiding spirit in human affairs should be, and one day will be, a scientific humanitarianism working on rational principles for the peace and happiness of all mankind.

"Ring out the grief that saps the mind
For those that here we see no more;
Ring out the feud of rich and poor,
Ring in redress to all mankind.

Ring out a slowly dying cause,
And ancient forms of party strife;
Ring in the nobler modes of life,
With sweeter manners, purer laws.

Ring out false pride in place and blood,
The civic slander and the spite;
Ring in the love of truth and right,
Ring in the common love of good.

Ring out old shapes of foul disease,
Ring out the narrowing lust of gold;
Ring out the thousand wars of old,
Ring in the thousand years of peace."

[1] P. 387 of *The Independent Review*, December, 1904.

# APPENDIX

## CHAPTER I.

P. 5, lines 12–14.—*The Copernican system was gradually accepted, and so were the discoveries which followed up to fifty years ago.*

Copernicus's book, *The Revolution of the Celestial Bodies*, was printed a few days before his death, in 1543. The system was condemned by a decree of Pope Paul V., in 1616, which was not revoked till 1818 by Pius VII. The great Kepler (d. 1630) was an astrologer as well as astronomer, and thought the stars were guided by angels. While his mind had a strong grasp of positive scientific truth, it also had an irresistible tendency towards mystical speculation. In those days Science and Religion were easily reconciled. It was fortunate for Newton that he made his discovery of the law of gravitation in a rather more enlightened age and country, otherwise he would inevitably have shared the terrible fate of Giordano Bruno at the hands of the Church's emissaries.

Even in the early eighteenth century the light of science had hardly got beyond the first glimmering of dawn. Mathematics and astronomy were the only sciences which had passed into the positive and final stage. Chemistry, geology, biology, historical criticism, were not yet in a position to speak with authority even on subjects in their own province. Read a popular apologetic work of the eighteenth century; read *Truth and Certainty of Christian Revelation*, edition 1724, and you will find that a defender of the faith had in those days a comparatively easy task. Science being still in its infancy, Dr. Samuel Clarke gave reasons for the truth of Christian dogmas, which, though they could not be controverted then, would now be considered the most abject nonsense. Read also Mr. S. Laing's remarks on p. 13 of *A Modern Zoroastrian*, where he tells us that when he was "a student at Cambridge, little more than fifty years ago, astronomy was the only branch of natural science which could be said to be definitely brought within the domain of natural law, and that only as regards the law of gravity and the motions of the heavenly bodies, for little or nothing was known as to their constitution."

P. 5, lines 18–19.—*The vast antiquity of the earth.*

"It does not seem unreasonable to suppose that 500 to 1,000 million years may have elapsed since the birth of the moon" (see Professor Darwin's Presidential address at the meeting of the British Association in Johannesburg on August 30th, 1905).

P. 8, lines 27–9.—*He is well aware of the odium he would incur should he proclaim his heterodox views concerning the popular religion.*

Nor is it easy for even a well-known man to get his heterodox views published where they will be widely read. Sir Hiram Maxim wrote lately to the *Literary Guide* concerning his letter in the "Do We Believe?" correspondence, saying "it was necessary for my letter to have a slight coating of ecclesiastical sugar, otherwise it would not have been published." Does the Church realise the extent to which men of science coat their popular writings with "ecclesiastical sugar"? The retail bookselling trade in England is still largely in the hands of persons belonging to the various sects, and, even where this is not so, few dare to push the works of glaringly heterodox writers. As an example of the difficulties which beset the way of a too truth-loving author, we may notice that it took three years before 2,000 copies of Mr. Samuel Laing's *Modern Science and Modern Thought* could be sold, and its sale brought him no pecuniary profit.

P. 19, lines 2–3.—*He* [Sir Oliver Lodge] *has never yet professed belief in a personal God.*

He has now done so. In an article entitled "First Principles of Faith," appearing in the *Hibbert Journal* for July, 1906, he has drawn up a new formula of faith, which commences: "I believe in one Infinite and Eternal Being, a guiding and loving Father, in whom all things consist." He continues: "I believe that the Divine Nature is specially revealed to man through Jesus Christ our Lord, who lived and taught and suffered in Palestine 1,900 years ago, and has since been worshipped by the Christian Church as the immortal Son of God, the Saviour of the world." This reconstructed Christian (?) creed has been deftly worded; but this, at least, is clear—the Virgin-birth, Resurrection, and Ascension form no part of the religious belief of Sir Oliver Lodge. The full text of the "Catechism" which he has designed for the use of teachers and others interested in the education of the young appears in the *Standard* of December 14th, 1906.

P. 20, line 31.—*The religious naturally wish to discredit science.*

It is a common assertion of the pious that modern science has continually to retrace its steps, and admit that it was mistaken in its facts and theories. The following pronouncement by Professor Ray Lankester, in his Presidential Address at the annual meeting of the British Association (held at York in 1906), should disillusion them: "During the last few years an idea has spread abroad that some of the more recent discoveries of science have revolutionised scientific ideas—have upset former theories, or have reversed them. Nothing is further from the truth."

P. 25, lines 19–20.—*They* [Agnostics] *"exhibit the very temper which Christ blesses."*

Canon Scott Holland's precise words were: "It is no petulant boy making his petulant repudiation, but a man with steady and deliberate judgment, weighing, examining, testing, and still, at last to his own sorrow, to his own confessed cost, bravely facing what he deems to

be the fact, and pronouncing, 'I am not of the Body; I cannot share the life of the Christian community.' And yet, if we look at him, we recognise in every detail of his character the lines that lead to Christ. He illustrates and exhibits the very temper which Christ blesses; he is pure, unselfish, humble, and good.....He may say what he pleases, but Christ has not forsworn him." Subsequently he acknowledges in moving terms that, *as the populations are emerging from out of their darkness, so they are repudiating the name of Christ.* But he gives no explanation for a circumstance so perplexing to a Christian.

Let me not be misunderstood to say that this extremely lenient view towards the Agnostic is the usual one at present. On the contrary, the Bishop of Moray voices the opinion of the majority of the orthodox when (at the Diocesan Synod held at Inverness Cathedral in the autumn of 1904) he challenges the wisdom of this sympathetic attitude, and asks: "Is this a time to banish into silence, or relegate to an inferior position, the great bulwark of the Faith—the Athanasian Creed?" We are to understand that the curses of the Creed are reserved, not for the man who is born of heathen parents, but for the man who, often with much uprooting of his dearest hopes, and at the cost of losing many friends and even his original means of livelihood, decides that he must forsake the Faith. It seems to me that, before converting the heathen, it would be only fair that the terrible fate they will incur by any subsequent recantation should be distinctly explained to them.

Again, the Rev. J. Morgan Gibbon, in his pamphlet, *Atheism and Faith*, represents the Atheist in the guise of the Tempter "holding out the bribe of free indulgence of all the passions to our youth, our working classes, our governing classes, and our capitalists." Clergymen who speak with such bitterness and make such sweeping assertions really betray the weakness of their own case. For it is a psychological fact that men are always angriest when they know they are not quite in the right. It is also a statistical fact (so far as statistics can be relied upon for facts) that crime among disbelievers is proportionately small, while among the staunchest believers, the Roman Catholics, it is proportionately large.

P. 29, line 23.—*Excite prejudice by the use of a condemnatory adjective.*

*The Riddle of the Universe* was described as a "book of rubbish" by Father Gerard, a member of the "Society of Jesus." He has not the least authority for such an indictment. On the contrary, every single biologist would tell him that he was himself talking rubbish. The Turin Academy crowned it as the best book written in the last four years of the nineteenth century. Clergymen seem to prefer to get their science from apologetic works only. How many, I wonder, have ever read the masterly exposition of the case for Haeckel—*Haeckel's Critics Answered*, by Joseph McCabe?

P. 30, lines 13–14.—*"In relief of doubt."*

A work entitled *In Relief of Doubt*, by the Rev. R. E. Welsh, a Presbyterian minister, is an attempt by an exceedingly earnest man to remove doubts concerning the Bible. There is an introductory note by the Bishop of London. The book is written in what the Bishop terms a "racy" style, and has the merit of much straight-

forwardness; but few well-informed, and at the same time open-minded, readers would agree with the conclusions of the author. The argument that St. Paul was a contemporary of Christ is one of the principal features; but see Chap. II., § 3, and Chap. III., § 2.

P. 31, lines 27–8.—*The Roman Catholic Church in Ireland.*

In *Priests and People in Ireland*, by Michael McCarthy, there is a complete *exposé* of the methods and results of Christian teaching in this portion of the British Isles, and a portrait of a typical Roman Catholic priest which demonstrates his elevating (?) influence. Also see *Twelve Years in a Monastery* and *Life in a Modern Monastery*, by Joseph McCabe.

P. 33, lines 32–3.—*The Roman Catholic Church is more consistent.*

"The Papal Church, founded, to a large extent, on superstition and ignorance, has ever been afraid of knowledge, of study, and education; hence she only consulted her own life's interests when, in the Middle Ages, she decreed knowledge to be identical with heresy, and heresy to be punishable by death." These words are quoted from *The Roman Catholic Church in Italy*, by the Rev. Alexander Robertson, D.D., a book accorded a flattering reception by the King of Italy in 1903. Again, Lord Macaulay, speaking of the Roman Catholic Church in the first chapter of his *History of England*, says that, "during the last three centuries, to stunt the growth of the human mind has been her chief object. Throughout Christendom, whatever advance has been made in knowledge, in freedom, in wealth, and in the arts of life, has been made in spite of her, and has everywhere been made in inverse proportion to her power. The loveliest and most fertile provinces of Europe have, under her rule, been sunk in poverty, in political servitude, and in intellectual torpor."

P. 38, line 7.—*Gifts for the needy.*

The exhortation to "give to the poor" is a precept of all the great religions. Indiscriminate giving was inculcated by the disciples of Christ, who *were* the poor, and Asiatic poor at that. The pity of it is that often more harm than good is done because the "Divine" command does not specify the *deserving* poor. Hence that wholesale pauperisation of which the evil effects are especially apparent among the Jews and in Oriental countries.

## Chapter II.

P. 44, lines 22–3.—*Mansel, Mozley, Farrar, Westcott*, on Miracles.

Dean Mansel said: "If there be one fact recorded in Scripture which is entitled, in the fullest sense of the word, to the name of a miracle, the Resurrection of Christ is that fact. Here, at least, is an instance in which the entire Christian faith must stand or fall with our belief in the supernatural.....A superhuman authority needs to be substantiated by superhuman evidence, and what is superhuman is miraculous" (pp. 3 and 35 of *Aids to Faith*, 4th ed.).

Canon Mozley said: "Miracles and the supernatural contents of Christianity must stand or fall together" (Bampton Lectures, 1865).

Dean Farrar said: "However skilfully the modern ingenuity of semi-belief may have tampered with supernatural interpositions, it is clear to every honest and unsophisticated mind that, if miracles be incredible, Christianity is false" (*The Witness of History to Christ*, Hulsean Lectures for 1870, 2nd ed., p. 25).

Bishop Westcott said: "The essence of Christianity lies in a miracle, and, if it can be shown that a miracle is either impossible or incredible, all further inquiry into the details of its history is superfluous from a religious point of view" (*The Gospel of the Resurrection*, 3rd ed., 1874, p. 34). See also Archbishop Trench's *Notes on Miracles*.

P. 44, lines 28–9.—*The opinion of the majority of our living dignitaries.*

This has been made abundantly clear by the unanimous reply of a large number of Bishops to a correspondent of the *Record*, who had written letters to them stating that he had heard that "not a single Bishop on the bench to-day believed in the miraculous in religion" (reported in the daily papers towards the close of January, 1905).

P. 48, lines 25–6.—*Some even hold that it* [devil-possession] *still exists.*

Thus, in the introduction to *Pastor Hsi* (a book of which 24,000 copies were printed between 1903 and 1905), the Rev. D. E. Hoste, General Director of the China Inland Mission, not only expresses this belief, but seeks to explain why devil-possession should now be chiefly confined to heathen lands. "Careful observation and study of the subject have," he says, "led many to conclude that, although in lands where Christianity has long held sway the special manifestations we are now considering are comparatively unknown, the conditions among the heathen being more akin to those prevailing when and where the Gospel was first propagated, it is not surprising that a corresponding energy of the powers of evil should be met with in missionary work to-day." He would have us believe, apparently, that the atmosphere of holiness in Christendom is so overpowering that the Devil and his crew are rendered less active! Taking him seriously, can he also explain how it is that God permits devils to perform such pranks? Not only is the house "swept and garnished" that they may "enter in, and dwell there"; but in the case of Saul we are told that they were purposely sent by God! (See Luke xi. 25, 26, and 1 Sam. xviii. 10 and xix. 9.)

The importance of this question is brought home to us by Mr. Benn in his *History of English Rationalism in the Nineteenth Century*, where he says (p. 454): "The witness of Jesus to the Fatherhood of God as a personal spirit amounts to no more than his witness to personal devils as authors of disease; and the witness of the Evangelists to their Master's authorship of the Sermon on the Mount is less unanimous than their witness to the destruction by diabolical agency of the Gadarene swine."

P. 49, lines 13–14.—*The feeding of the five thousand.*

Bishop Ingram attaches the utmost importance to the truth of this miracle. In a sermon published in the *Church Times* of October 7th, 1904, he is reported to have said: "It is the worst policy of defence to throw over the miracle of feeding the five thousand, or our Lord's

power over disease and death, and then expect to keep the faith of the world in His incarnation, His Virgin-birth, and His resurrection."

P. 61, line 14.—*The simple theory of the spiritists.*

Dr. Moncure Conway relates, in his *Autobiography*, how it was a spiritualist *séance* which made him realise the kind of frenzy that took possession of those early Christians who really believed that a dead man had returned to life. See also Professor Lombroso on "spiritualistic" phenomena, p. 396.

P. 64, lines 20-1.—*Few of us have ever had our belief tested.*

Persons who have never spent their lives, or a portion of their lives, among the heathen, have never had their faith put to the fullest test, for in such an environment they would find faith's difficulties considerably enhanced. I remember, a few days after my arrival in India, a certain Bishop looking me in the face and, with a kindly hand upon my shoulder, saying: "You will find life much more difficult in India." He referred, of course, to the religious life, and was quite right, although, probably, he was thinking chiefly of the example that I should find set me by my fellow Christians; while, as mine was largely a camp life, it was more the insight into the belief of my native companions which affected me. There, all around you, are simple folk believing in what you know to be absurd; you are brought face to face with ignorance and superstition; you see how faith can be misplaced, and how trusting natures can be deceived. It sets you thinking whether, after all, you too may not be deceived; whether the possession of an unlimited capacity for faith has the virtue in it which the priest tells you it has, whether, in fact, faith is a reliable guide. Should you attempt to convert an educated native, you not only find that the task is hopeless, but that you are asking him to accept a belief which is as unfounded and unproven as the one he already holds. Anyone wishing to form some idea of an experience of this sort should read *The Bible: Is it the Word of God?* by Thomas Lumsden Strange, formerly a judge of the High Court of Madras. The way the observations are cast in the shape of a conversation between a student of the Bible and a cultured native of India brings home many Bible difficulties which largely escape the notice and consideration of the devout. I have taken my illustration from this book.

## Chapter III.

P. 77, lines 11-12.—*Encyclopædia Biblica.*

(My best thanks are due to Mr. C. T. Gorham for permitting me to make a free use of his notes on the *Enc. Bib.*)

In case the reader may jump to the conclusion that this is a work compiled by collecting the most heretical views from all parts of the globe (as I was informed by the librarian when I inquired for the book in a Cathedral library), let me call attention to the list of contributors, among whom will be found many English ministers of the Gospel. For instance:—

The Rev. Archibald R. S. Kennedy, D.D., Professor of Hebrew and Semitic Languages, Edinburgh.

The Rev. C. F. Burney, M.A., Lecturer in Hebrew, and Fellow of St. John's College, Oxford.

The Rev. Claude Hermann Walter Johns, M.A., Hon. Sec. Camb. Pupil Teachers' Centre.

The Rev. George Adam Smith, M.A., D.D., LL.D., Professor of Hebrew and Old Testament Exegesis, Free Church College, Glasgow.

The Very Rev. J. A. Robinson, D.D., Dean of Westminster.

The Rev. Owen Charles Whitehouse, M.A., Principal and Professor of Biblical Exegesis and Theology in the Countess of Huntingdon's College, Cheshunt, Herts.

The Rev. R. H. Charles, M.A., D.D., Professor of Biblical Greek, Trinity College, Dublin.

The Rev. Samuel Rolles Driver, D.D., Regius Professor of Hebrew, Canon of Christ Church, Oxford.

The Rev. T. K. Cheyne, M.A., D.D., Oriel Professor of the Interpretation of Holy Scripture at Oxford, Canon of Rochester.

The Rev. T. Witton Davies, B.A., Ph.D., Professor of Old Testament Literature, North Wales Baptist College, Bangor; Lecturer in Semitic Languages, University College.

The Rev. William E. Addis, M.A., Lecturer in Old Testament Criticism, Manchester College, Oxford.

The Rev. William Henry Bennett, Litt.D., D.D., Professor of Biblical Languages and Literature, Hackney College, London, and Professor of Old Testament Exegesis, New College, London.

The Rev. William Sanday, D.D., LL.D., Lady Margaret Professor of Divinity, Canon of Christ Church, Oxford.

The Rev. A. B. Davidson, D.D., Professor of Hebrew and Old Testament Exegesis, United Free Church New College, Edinburgh.

The Rev. George Buchanan Gray, M.A., Professor of Hebrew, Mansfield College, Oxford.

The rapid advance of Bible criticism in late years is well seen by comparing articles in Dr. W. Smith's *Dictionary of the Bible* (1860), in the *Encyclopædia Britannica*, signed W. R. S. (between 1875 and 1888), and in the *Encyclopædia Biblica* (1899 to 1903). Even the comparatively conservative *Hastings's Dictionary* (1898–1902, with extra volume 1904) contains articles which would have been condemned as heretical half a century ago. Speaking of the *Enc. Bib.* and *Hastings's Dictionary*, Mr. Benn remarks (in his *History of Rationalism*) that, "as regards the Old Testament, their respective attitudes do not essentially differ, Wellhausen's theory being accepted by both."

P. 80, line 18.—*We have now got the stone and read the inscriptions.*

For a popular account of this interesting discovery (upon the site of Susa, the ancient city of the Persian kings, in December, 1901) see *The Hammurabi Code*, by Chilperic Edwards.

P. 103, line 16–17.—*A disputed passage in Tacitus.*

The sceptical theory is that, had it been genuine, the passage would not have been overlooked by all the early Christian writers in the various disputations with objectors, and especially by Tertullian,

who quoted largely from his works, and the ecclesiastical historian Eusebius, who was zealous in his defence of the Faith and greedy of materials with which to support it. (An important French student of Tacitus holds that the whole *Annals* is medieval!) On the other hand, the style is thoroughly Tacitean, containing a number of words and expressions elsewhere used by the author, and more or less characteristic of him, yet without any such elaborate over-imitation as we should expect to find even in a skilful forgery. Nor is the subject-matter perhaps less characteristic, while the MS. evidence is in favour of the passage being genuine. Taking it to be so, what, after all, does it amount to? Merely this. Christ was put to death by Pontius Pilate, and a very large number of Christians were put to death in a horrible manner by Nero. The passage occurs in Tacitus, *Annals*, XV., 44, and runs as follows: "Consequently, to get rid of the accusation, Nero fastened the guilt and inflicted the most exquisite tortures on a class hated for their abominations, called by the populace 'Christians.' Christus, from whom the name had its origin, suffered the extreme penalty during the reign of Tiberius at the hands of one of our procurators, Pontius Pilate, and a most mischievous superstition, thus checked for the moment, again broke out not only in Judæa, the first source of the evil, but even in Rome, where all things hideous and shameful from every part of the world find their centre and become popular. Accordingly, an arrest was first made of all who pleaded guilty; then, upon their information, an immense multitude was convicted, not so much of the crime of firing the city, as of hatred of mankind. Mockery of every sort was added to their deaths. Covered with the skins of beasts, they were torn by dogs and perished, or were nailed to crosses, or were doomed to the flames and burnt to serve as a nightly illumination when daylight had expired. Nero offered his gardens for the spectacle."

P. 107, lines 19–20.—*The true likeness of our Lord had been miraculously transmitted.*

Presumably my informant was referring to the legend of St. Veronica, since the equally absurd *History of the Likeness of Christ* (translated by E. A. Wallis Budge) closes with these words: "And the angel took the likeness from where it was standing, and he removed it; and no man hath ever seen it since."

## Chapter IV.

P. 121, line 22.—*Born in a cave.*

"Justin Martyr the Apologist, who, from his birth at Shechem, was familiar with Palestine, and who lived less than a century after the time of our Lord, places the scene of the nativity in a cave. This is, indeed, the ancient and constant tradition both of the Eastern and the Western Churches, and it is one of the few to which, though unrecorded in Gospel history, we may attach a reasonable probability" (see p. 20 of the cheap edition [1906] of Farrar's *Life of Christ*). The grotto of the manger in the Church of the Nativity at Bethlehem is certainly a cave. Embedded in the rock is a much-kissed silver

star bearing the inscription: "*Hic de Virgine Maria Jesus Christus natus est.*"

P. 122, line 6.—*Krishna was slain.*

The Vishnu Purâna speaks of his being shot in the foot with an arrow. Other accounts state that he was suspended on a tree. "On raconte fort diversement la mort de Crishna. Une tradition remarquable et avérée le fait périr sur un bois fatal (un arbre), ou il fut cloué d'un coup de flèche" (quoted from Mons. Guigniaut's *Religion de l'Antiquité*, by Higgins; *Anacalypsis*, vol. i., p. 144). In the accounts given in the Mahâbhârata, Vishnu Purâna, and Bhagavat Purâna, the slaying is unintentional, but predestined. There appears to have been a crucifixion myth in ancient India; but Godfrey Higgins' assumption that Krishna was crucified rests mainly on an oversight of the archæologist Moor (see J. M. Robertson's *Christianity and Mythology*, pp. 294–9).

P. 123, lines 24-5.—*Almost every important episode of the life of Christ.*

"With the remarkable exception of the death of Jesus on the cross and of the doctrine of atonement by vicarious suffering, which is absolutely excluded by Buddhism, the most ancient of the Buddhistic records known to us contain statements about the life and the doctrines of Gautama Buddha which correspond in a remarkable manner, and impossibly by mere chance, with the traditions recorded in the Gospels about the life and doctrine of Jesus Christ" (quoted from p. 50 of Bunsen's *Angel Messiah*).

P. 124, line 1.—*Buddha was miraculously born.*

Maya dreams that she is carried by archangels to heaven, and that there the future Buddha enters her right side in the form of a superb white elephant. Rhys Davids relates this legend on p. 183 of his *Buddhism*, and in a footnote he says: "Csoma Korösi refers in a distant way to a belief of the later Mongol Buddhists that Maya was a virgin (As. Res. xx. 299); but this has not been confirmed. St. Jerome says (*Adversus Jovin.*, bk. 1): 'It is handed down as a tradition among the Gymnosophists of India that Buddha, the founder of their system, was brought forth by a virgin from her side.'" In Samuel Beal's *Romantic History of Buddha* (from the Chinese version) we read of Buddha's miraculous birth, and that there is ground to assume the prevalence of this belief for centuries before Christ. Bunsen, again (p. x. of his *Angel-Messiah*), speaks of the "Virgin Maya, on whom, according to Chinese tradition, the Holy Ghost had descended"; and elsewhere (*e.g.*, pp. 10 and 25) he adopts this version of the legend. Dr. Knowling, in his apologetic work, *Our Lord's Virgin Birth and the Criticism of To-day*, pp. 53–4, lays stress upon the grotesqueness of the idea that a man should enter his mother's womb in the form of a white elephant. But, as Dr. Rhys Davids explains (p. 184 of *Buddhism*), there is nothing bizarre when the origin of the poetical figure has been ascertained. The belief was borrowed from the older sun-worship, "*the white elephant, like the white horse* [*cf.* Rev. vi. 2 and xix. 11, 14], *being an emblem of the sun, the universal monarch of the sky.*"

P. 126, lines 1–2.—*He was very early regarded as omniscient and absolutely sinless.*

Dr. Rhys Davids's remarks on the *early* growth of myths concerning Buddha, coming as they do from a champion of the Christian cause, are full of significance for anyone who permits himself to think and who keeps an open mind. He says (p. 182 of *Buddhism*): "The belief soon sprang up that he could not have been, that he was not, born as ordinary men are; that he had no earthly father; that he descended of his own accord into his mother's womb from his throne in heaven; and that he gave unmistakeable signs, immediately after his birth, of his high character and of his future greatness."

We have a perfect illustration of the possibility and rapidity of the legend-making process in the nineteenth century. The Bab (or "gateway") was a Persian reformer who suffered martyrdom at the hands of the authorities in 1850. Within forty years an evidently mythical version of his life was current among his followers in the form of a Gospel. Babism inculcates a high morality, and there is a likelihood of its becoming paramount in Persia. For further information on this new religion see *Life and Teachings of Abbas Effendi*, by Myron H. Phelps (Putnam).

P. 127, line 10.—*Born of the Virgin Isis.*

It is true, as Dr. Knowling points out (p. 56 of *The Virgin Birth*), and as I have personally seen, that in the inscriptions and scenes in the temple of Luxor "we have at least some elements of the glorifying of sensual desire which is so far removed from the chaste restraint and simplicity of the Evangelists." But the parallel is not a whit the less admissible because the same story appears in a fresh garb to suit the higher ideals of a new religion.

P. 130, note 1.—*Mexican Antiquities.*

Most of Viscount Kingsborough's life and fortune was devoted to his illustrated work, *Antiquities of Mexico* (nine volumes and a portion of a tenth volume, imperial folio, London, 1830–48). No anti-Christian spirit inspired his labours; on the contrary, he attempted to prove a Jewish migration to Mexico. Though the attempt failed, he bequeathed to posterity an invaluable work on the ancient religion of Mexico.

P. 131, line 26.—*Healing miracles, such as those performed by Jesus.*

Conyers Middleton, formerly principal librarian of Cambridge University, tells us that in the temples of Æsculapius all kinds of diseases were believed to be publicly cured, by the pretended help of the Deity, in proof of which there were erected in each temple columns of brass or marble, on which a distinct narrative of each particular cure was described. There is a remarkable fragment of one of these tables still extant, and exhibited by Gruter in his collection (just as it was found in the ruins of the temple of Æsculapius in the Tiber island), which gives an account of two blind men restored to sight by Æsculapius, in the open view, and with the loud acclamation of the people, acknowledging the manifest power of the god. Compare St. Matthew ix. 27–30. Is it not truly marvellous to think that

exactly the same sort of thing is going on at the various miracle-working shrines of Christendom at the present moment? Is it not also surprising to hear certain divines in our own country speak of the alleged miracles of the early Church as if they were real, and as if it were a sort of lost art due to our poorer faith in modern times? I am referring to sermons preached lately from various pulpits on the subject of Christian Science and Faith-cures.

P. 133, line 20.—*Acted in Athens five hundred years before the Christian era.*

In the *Nineteenth Century* for March, 1905, Mr. Slade Butler points out, in his article on "The Greek Mysteries and the Gospel Narrative," that in the first century after Christ these mysteries, in one form or another, had become the recognised religion of the Greek world. Mr. Butler takes in turn all the main features of the Gospel narratives, and shows their close resemblance to incidents of the Greek mystery-dramas. The baptism of John, the triumphal procession in honour of Jesus, His clearing of the temple, *the cursing of the fig tree*, the Last Supper, the mocking of Jesus in His death-agony, are shown to have striking parallels in the sacred mysteries of the Greeks.

P. 133, line 23.—*Even Bacchus....was a slain Saviour.*

Dupuis, *The Origin of all Religious Worship*, pp. 135 and 258; Higgins, *Anacalypsis*, vol. ii., p. 102; Knight, *The Symbolical Language of Ancient Art and Mythology*, p. xxii., note, and p. 98, note.

P. 134, lines 7–8.—*Pagan crucifixions of the young incarnate divinities of India, Persia, Asia Minor, and Egypt.*

We have it on the authority of a Christian Father that the Pagans adored crosses; for Tertullian, a Christian Father of the second and third centuries, writing to the Pagans, says: "The origin of your god is derived from figures moulded on a cross" (*Apol.*, chap. xvi.; *Ad Nationes*, chap. xii.). At the present moment, both in Europe and America, the Egyptian cross or "life" sign is a fashionable ornament, under the name of *crux ansata* (or cross with a handle). Its pious wearers are, of course, quite unaware that it is the phallic emblem! Could anything more conclusively demonstrate the prevailing ignorance of comparative mythology?[1]

P. 138, note.—*The probable date of the origin of the story* [of Buddha, Chinese version].

"A very valuable date, later than which we cannot place the origin

[1] To those willing to be instructed I suggest a perusal of Doane's *Bible Myths and their Parallels in Other Religions* (New York: The Commonwealth Company), where they will find some intensely interesting information which has been laboriously gathered from innumerable volumes, ancient and modern. The few inaccuracies occurring in it are of a trivial nature; besides, as the author invariably quotes his authorities, his statements can be verified and the trustworthiness of his authority for them ascertained. I may add that I found this work of considerable assistance at the commencement of my study of Comparative Mythology.

of the story, may be derived from the colophon at the end of the last chapter of the book. It is there stated that the Abhinish Kramana Sûtra is called by the school of the Dharmaguptas Fo-pen-hing-king. ....We know from the 'Chinese Encyclopædia,' Kai-yuen-shi-kiau-mu-lu, that the Fo-pen-hing was translated into Chinese from the Sanscrit (the ancient language of Hindostan) so early as the eleventh year of the reign of Wing-ping (Ming-ti), of the Han dynasty—*i. e.*, 69 or 70 A.D. We may therefore safely suppose that the original work was in circulation in India for some time previous to that date." (Quoted from the Introduction to Mr. S. Beal's *Romantic History of Buddha.*) Thus, as the writer of the article on the Gospels in the *Enc. Bib.* observes, when referring to the parallels: "The proof that the Buddhistic sources are older than the Christian must be regarded as irrefragable."

P. 148, line 21.—*Modern non-Christian beliefs*, Parallels in the rites of.

Very similar ceremonies are to be found among the heathen to-day. For instance, something very like our Eucharistical rite is performed in modern Japan. Looking on at a service in a Shinto temple, I was much struck by the extraordinary similarity of the whole ceremony. It was a sort of High Mass with Gregorian music. The blessed wafers are not eaten on the premises, but are taken away by the worshippers to be used in time of sickness. The worshippers, I may mention, were all of the poorer and more ignorant classes.

P. 150, line 10.—*Their blood was drunk in the form of wine.*

Regarding this, Mr. Grant Allen remarks: When Dionysus became the annual or biennial vine-god victim, "it was inevitable that his worshippers should have seen his resurrection and embodiment in the vine, and should have regarded the wine it yielded as the blood of the god."

P. 156, lines 19–20.—*Adopting their dates for the birth and death* [and resurrection] *of their Saviours.*

At the winter solstice the sun seemed to the ancients to be commencing its annual journey round the heavens. Accordingly, December 25th was considered to be the sun's birthday, which was annually celebrated by a great festival in many parts of the heathen world—in China, India, Persia, Egypt, and also in ancient Greece, Rome, Germany, Scandinavia, Great Britain, Ireland, and America. Similarly, at the vernal equinox, the sun, which has been below the equator, suddenly appears to rise above it, and so, usually upon a date calculated by the pagan astronomers (and corresponding roughly to our Easter), we find that throughout a considerable portion of the ancient world, after mourning the sun's death (sometimes for a period of three days), the Resurrection was celebrated with great rejoicings. Primitive man regarded all sensible objects as instinct with a conscious life. He noted the changes of days and years, and the objects which so changed were to him as living things. The rising and setting sun, the return of summer and winter, became a drama in which the actors were his friends or enemies. It was no allegory, but, strange as it appears to us now, all an absolute reality.

Christ's birth was ultimately placed at the winter solstice, the birthday of the sun-god in the most popular cults; and, while that is fixed as an anniversary, the date of the Crucifixion is made to vary from year to year in order to conform to the astronomical principle on which the Jews, following the sun-worshippers, had fixed their Passover. This ignorance of the early Church concerning the dates of the Jesus' birth, death, and "resurrection," is an exceedingly suspicious circumstance. If the fundamental verities were an objective fact to the early Christians, how *could* the dates have been so utterly forgotten that dates belonging to idolatrous superstitions had to be adopted? It is perplexing enough that God should have allowed the memory of His Son's life on earth to be handed down for a considerable time by tradition only; but that He should have permitted such lapses of memory and the substitution of the dates of pagan festivals is to me altogether inconceivable. It could not but raise suspicion concerning His revelation in future thinking generations. We have a certain knowledge of the dates of comparatively unimportant events in the world's history, ages before the Christian era. If these important dates could be forgotten, what else may not have been forgotten; what else may not have been substituted in the place of forgotten incidents? Again, did not the disciples and their converts celebrate the anniversaries of these great events? And, if so, on what dates? The question is of more importance than perhaps at first sight it appears to be. The public will soon be asking the Church for a satisfactory explanation, and she must be prepared to furnish it. In the *Daily Telegraph*, during the Christmas of 1904, the public were informed that "the most erudite archæologists and professors of Church history confess that there is not a particle of evidence, either Biblical or traditional, for the claim of December 25th to be the birthday of Christ, and that everything goes to prove that our existing festival of the Nativity was introduced to replace the heathen festival of the 'sol invictus' in Southern Italy, and of the Yule or Winter solstice festival among the ancient Teutons." Again, in the *Daily Graphic* during the Easter of 1905, the public will have read that "there is no particular sanctity in the 'Table to Find Easter,' based as it is upon the calculations of a pagan astronomer who lived four hundred years before Christ." In France the Christian names of the four statutory holidays have been abolished by law. Christmas is called the Festival of the Family, and so on. The time is coming, and is even now at hand, when the English public will discover ugly facts about Christianity without having to read books published by freethinking firms —books which the parson advises us to leave severely alone.

P. 160, lines 3-4.—*Why do we hear so little of this great discovery from the pulpit?*

The following from a sermon by the Bishop of Manchester, preached in Manchester Cathedral on Sunday, September 4th, 1887, forms a striking exception to the rule. "The sufficient answer," says the Bishop, "to ninety out of a hundred of the ordinary objections to the Bible, as the record of a divine education of our race, is given in that one word—*development*. And to what are we indebted for that

potent word, which, as with the wand of a magician, has at the same moment so completely transformed our knowledge and dispelled our difficulties? *To modern science, resolutely pursuing its search for truth in spite of popular obloquy* and—alas that one should have to say it—*in spite too often of theological denunciation!*" (Quoted by Professor Huxley in his essay on "An Episcopal Trilogy.") Would that there were equal candour all round! But this indebtedness of theology to science in spite of itself is certainly one of the many workings of the Holy Spirit which are quite inexplicable. All the more so when we remember that truth-seeking scientists are, nowadays, usually Agnostics.

P. 165, lines 38–9.—*A Mithraist could turn to the Christian worship and find his main rites unimpaired.*

We have the witness of the Christian Fathers. Justin Martyr, after describing the institution of the Lord's Supper (1 *Apol.*, chap. 66), goes on to say: "Which the wicked devils have imitated in the mysteries of Mithra, commanding the same thing to be done. For that bread and a cup of water are placed with certain incantations in the mystic rites of the one who is being initiated, you either know or can learn." Tertullian intimates that "the devil, by the mysteries of his idols, imitates even the main parts of the divine mysteries. He also baptises his worshippers in water, and makes them believe that this purifies them of their crimes. There Mithra sets his mark on the forehead of his soldiers; he celebrates the oblation of bread; he offers an image of the resurrection, and presents at once the crown and sword; he limits his chief priest to a single marriage; he even has virgins and his ascetics *(continentes)*." (*Præscr.* c. 40. Cp. *De Bapt.* c. 5; *De Corona*, c. 15. Quoted on p. 322 of J. M. Robertson's *Pagan Christs*.) We have also the witness of modern discoveries. For example, Professor Franz Cumont, in his work, *Les Mystères de Mithra*, gives a photograph of a recently-discovered bas-relief, representing a Mithraic communion. On a small tripod is the bread, in the form of wafers, *each marked with a cross*.

CHAPTER V.

P. 172, lines 14–15.—*Ignorance of the gist of the Darwinian theory, "natural selection," has been fruitful in misunderstandings.*

It is very necessary to understand exactly what the theory of natural selection is and is not; because champions of the Faith, even when believing in Evolution, base some of their arguments on the alleged collapse of the Darwinian theory. Thus, in *Present-day Rationalism Critically Examined*, the Rev. Professor George Henslow affirms that, while the theory of Evolution stands on an impregnable basis, Haeckel's Monism and Rationalistic agnosticism are based on Darwin's doctrine of natural selection, and he enters upon an elaborate argument—covering sixty pages of his book—to show that the origin of species by means of natural selection is false, and that the primary cause of Evolution is the definite action of the environment, combined with the adaptive powers of the living organism. Such arguments, coming from a clergyman having scientific attainments, are likely to impress the average Christian reader and confuse the

main issue. Natural selection *is* "the action of the environment" (see *The Origin of Species*, chap. iv.), and even if it were not, and if natural selection (or *elimination*) were not the primary cause, the doctrine of the action of environment will suit the Monist just as well.

Regarding the minor, but not unimportant, part played by sexual selection, Darwin writes: "For my own part, I conclude that of all the causes which have led to the differences in external appearance between the races of men, and to a certain extent between man and the lower animals, sexual selection has been by far the most efficient" (*Descent of Man*, ed. 1871, ii., 367).

Scientists who are advocates of the Christian cause are not always as candid as one could wish. While the Church cited Sir Richard Owen "as an authority against the Darwinian theory, especially in its application to man's descent, there remained in the memory of his brother savants his lack of candour in never withdrawing the statement made by him, and demonstrated by Huxley as untrue, that the *hippocampus minor* in the human brain is absent from the brain of the ape." (See p. 172 of Mr. Clodd's *Pioneers of Evolution*. See also remarks by Sir Charles Lyell, pp. 485 and 486 of his work, *Antiquity of Man*. On p. 290 he further tells us that "we may consider the attempt to distinguish the brain of man from that of the ape on the ground of newly-discovered cerebral characters, presenting differences in kind, as *virtually* abandoned by its originator.")

P. 205, lines 18–20.—*That there are not more links missing is due principally to the discovery of fossil remains.*

The greatest importance has been attached to a discovery in Java, made in 1894 by Eugene Dubois. The remains consisted of the crown of the skull, two teeth, and a femur belonging to a creature for which the name *Pithecanthropus erectus* has been invented. This pithecanthropus excited the liveliest interest as the long-sought transitional form between man and the ape. Professor Haeckel writes concerning this in his book, *The Evolution of Man*, vol. ii., p. 633: "There were very interesting scientific discussions on it at the last three International Congresses of Zoology (Leyden, 1895; Cambridge, 1898; and Berlin, 1901). I took an active part in the discussion at Cambridge, and may refer the reader to the paper I read there." (It has been translated by Dr. Gadow, under the title of *The Last Link*.) Since then we have Professor Keasbey writing in 1901 that the remains have been "pronounced genuine," and Professor Packard, in 1902, that it is now "generally recognised."

Again, to give a still more recent "find," Dr. Andrews, who accompanied the Geological Survey of Egypt, has (as mentioned by Professor Ray Lankester in his lecture at the London Institution on November 2nd, 1906) discovered a remarkable skull (now in the Natural History Museum) which is the connecting link between elephants, ancient and modern, and other mammals.

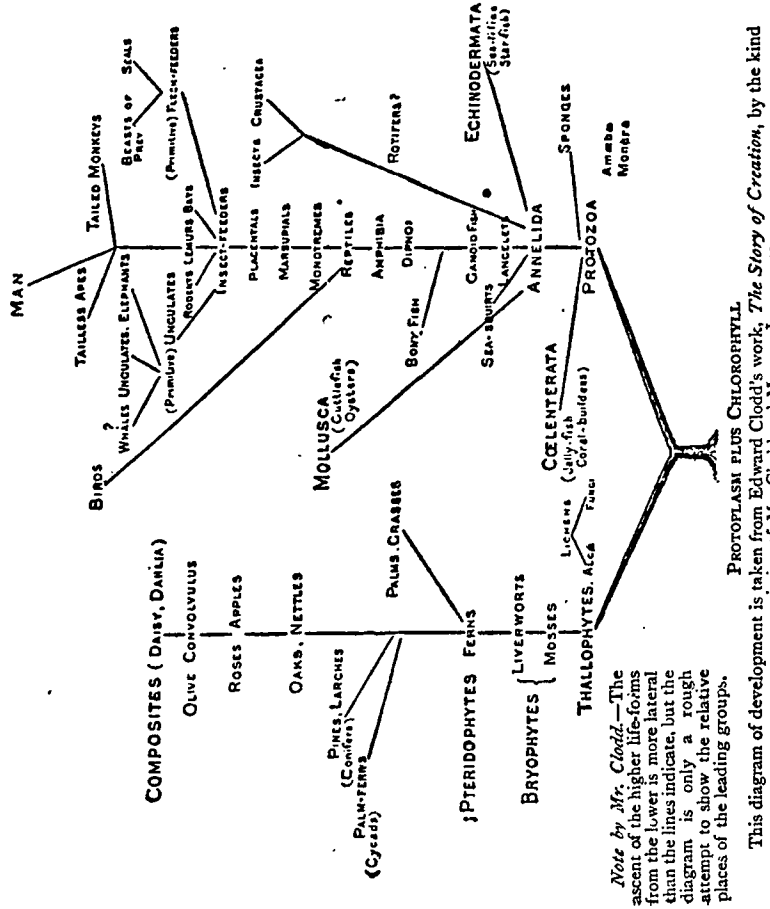
There have also been discoveries of missing links among the living. The duck-bill, a four-footed animal which lays eggs, is an important link between reptiles and mammals. Cuvier, the celebrated French naturalist, a persistent opponent of the evolutionary doctrines advanced by Lamarck and Geoffroy Saint-Hilaire, did not believe it

possible that any four-footed animal could lay eggs, and it was not till long after his time, and, indeed, only quite lately, that the statements of the natives were verified, and the eggs of the duck-bill actually found.

P. 208, lines 14–18.—*Enough has been said, I hope, to convince the reader that....there is overpowering evidence against separate acts of creation, and in favour of an animal origin of the human race.*

This Family Tree of Life will enable him to form a brain-picture of the various steps in the evolutionary process:—

[*Note.*—It is now generally admitted that man goes back at least 200,000 years.]




*Note by Mr. Clodd.*—The ascent of the higher life-forms from the lower is more lateral than the lines indicate, but the diagram is only a rough attempt to show the relative places of the leading groups.

This diagram of development is taken from Edward Clodd's work, *The Story of Creation*, by the kind permission of Mr. Clodd and Messrs. Longmans.

P. 218, lines 14–15.—*The dogmas of sin and its atonement.*

"Astronomers tell us that there are some 500,000,000 suns visible from our earth, many if not most of them larger than our sun, and all of them presumably surrounded by planets at least as important as our earth; and to maintain the old theological view of the supreme value of this little insignificant planet in the eyes of the 'Almighty Ruler' of such a universe, or to suppose that He would send His 'Only Son' to die for us little cosmic microbes, is presumption which, when one thinks of it, really seems to amount to insanity" (quoted from p. 108 of Richard Harte's *Lay Religion*).

## Chapter VI.

P. 220, line 1.—*Deism denies Christianity.*

"God," says Canon Liddon, "is banished from the world by deism, which puts nature in His place" (*Some Elements of Religion*, pp. 56–7). The seventeenth and eighteenth-century deists, however, did not deny the personality of God, but the fact of revelation. "In recent theology deism has generally come to be regarded as, in common with theism, holding in opposition to atheism that there is a God, and in opposition to pantheism that God is distinct from the world, but as differing from theism in maintaining that God is separate from the world, having endowed it with self-sustaining and self-acting powers, and then abandoned it to itself" (*Enc. Brit.*, art. "Theism").

P. 221, line 8.—"*What it is to be a Christian.*"

Archdeacon Wilson avers that "We dare not deny the name of Christian to such as live in Christ's spirit and do His will, though they know not for certain how God manifested himself in Christ, and will not profess a certainty they do not feel." Again, he argues that "We rest on the broad ground of the vast experience of the world, and the testimony of our own conscience, that Christ has lifted mankind up, and shown man what is good; and this we may describe as bringing man to God, and revealing God to man. This redemption, salvation, we acknowledge as a fact. He who has this faith in Christ, and lets it work its natural result in making him more like Christ, deserves to be called a Christian." This does, indeed, give plenty of latitude—far more, in fact, than the Church as a body seems likely to give for some time to come. It, and the Rev. R. J. Campbell's "New Theology," will certainly enable many who are in reality non-Christian theists to continue calling themselves Christians.

P. 224, note.—"*Haeckel's Critics Answered.*"

In the chapter on "God" there is a striking exposition of the very latest arguments for and against Theism. The opinions of Messrs. Ward, Newman, Smythe, Le Conte, Fiske, W. N. Clarke, Croll, Aubrey Moore, Iverach, Dallinger, Ballard, Rhondda Williams, Profeit, Kennedy, W. James, and Royce are all considered. Many pious Christians may have read the apologists' criticisms of Haeckel's well-known work, *The Riddle of the Universe*, but few will have studied the work itself, and still fewer these clear and convincing replies to the criticisms. It cannot be on account of the cost, as a copy of the cheap edition of either of these works can be obtained for 4½d.

P. 253, lines 25–6.—*Some such psychical experiences largely account for religious superstitions.*

With regard to phenomena at present popularly known as spiritualistic, but for which scientists have now adopted the term "metapsychical," the following declaration by Professor Lombroso (appearing in the review *La Lettura*, November, 1906) is of considerable interest. "As the result," he writes, "of our researches, I have been bound to admit the conviction that these phenomena are of colossal importance, and that it is the plain duty of science to direct attention towards them without delay." N.B.—The Professor, when interviewed subsequently by the Turin correspondent of the *Standard*, repudiated any suggestion of supernatural agency, and said: "All spiritualistic phenomena can be understood and explained without any reference to the intervention of the supernatural. Spiritualists affirm that the soul is an emanation from God, while I contend that it is an emanation of the brain. This is the whole thing in a nutshell. You therefore see how, from this point of view, I cannot be called a spiritualist—at least, in the sense in which the term is generally understood. Almost all spiritualistic phenomena can be classed among those positive facts which science can explain." However, in an article contributed by him to the *Grand Magazine* for January, 1907, and entitled "Why I became a Spiritualist," Professor Lombroso admits that he has felt himself "compelled to yield to the conviction that spiritualistic phenomena, if due in great part to the influence of the medium, are likewise attributable to the *influence of extra-terrestrial existences*, which may, perhaps, be compared to the radio-activity which still persists in tubes after the radium which originated them has disappeared." Professor Cesare Lombroso, it may be mentioned, is Professor of Psychiatry at the University of Turin, and the author of standard works on criminology, hypnotism, and psychology, as well as of a number of valuable treatises relating to cerebral study. Two of his publications, *Man of Genius* (1891) and *Female Offender* (1895), have been issued in English.

The phenomena Professor Lombroso refers to are those which have induced such eminent scientists as Wallace, Lodge, Hyslop, Barrett, and Crookes to remain or to become supernaturalists. One, and to my mind the chief, reason why these metapsychical phenomena are, as Professor Lombroso tells us, of colossal importance—why science should direct attention towards them without delay—is that, so soon as they are universally acknowledged to be manifestations occurring in obedience to one of Nature's laws—a law as yet not fully understood—the last excuse for belief in the supernatural will have vanished. Supernaturalism will receive its death-blow, and Rationalism be infused with fresh life.

P. 254, line 28.—*Professor James—an earnest champion of religion.*

In defining his philosophic position he admits his own "inability to accept either popular Christianity or scholastic Theism" (see his Postscript, p. 521). He is of opinion that both the metaphysical argument for God's existence and the arguments for a God with moral attributes must be rejected, and "*the man who is sincere with himself and the facts*, but who remains religious still," must soothe

"his perplexed and baffled intellect" with "a trustful sense of presence" (*ibid*, pp. 445–8). A careful perusal of his book, however, makes it tolerably clear that this feeling of the presence of Spiritual Beings is simply a hallucination.

P. 256, lines 22–26.—*There has never yet been a case of a Mohammedan or a Hindoo, or any other non-Christian, who,* WITHOUT HAVING HEARD OF CHRISTIANITY, *has had a revelation of Christian "truth."*

Chet Ram, the founder of a sect whose numbers, according to the last Indian census, "are increasing day by day," began by being a Hindu, and then became the disciple of a Mohammedan fakir in the Punjab. After following him for some years he had what he described as a vision of Christ, who revealed Himself as the author of salvation, and commanded him (Chet Ram) to build a church and to place within it the Bible. He was himself illiterate, but immediately began to proclaim the divinity of Christ, and was soon followed by disciples recruited alike from the Hindus and the Moslems. It is "religious" experiences such as these which continue to deceive even educated men and women, and hinder the growth of Rationalism.

## CHAPTER VII.

P. 285, lines 10–11.—*The ghastly death of the witch.*

"It is impossible to leave the history of witchcraft without reflecting how vast an amount of suffering has, in this respect at least, been removed by the progress of rationalistic civilisation.....It is probable that no class of victims endured sufferings so unalloyed and so intense.....All these sufferings were the result of a single superstition, *which the spirit of Rationalism has destroyed.*" (See pp. 137–8 of Lecky's *Rationalism in Europe*, Longmans, Green, & Co., 1904.)

Pp. 290–96, and p. 294, note 4.

The following are some further notes on the *spread of Christianity*:—

When, after more than three centuries, the spread became fairly rapid, owing, as we have seen, to circumstances of a distinctly mundane character, what was the effect on public morality? The Roman Empire passed its zenith in the first half of the second century—under Stoics. Historians agree that it was declining all through the third century. On the other hand, it was making fresh progress morally in the fourth century. It deteriorated morally after A.D. 380–90, the date of the triumph of Christianity! Do these facts bear out the Christian contention that Christianity purifies empire?

If we continue the history of Christianity's spread, we find similar samples of Divine Providence and similar samples of moral progress. Take, for instance, the facts connected with the conversion of the barbarians, as related by the author of the apologetic work, *Beneficial Influence of the Ancient Clergy*. We learn that "Many a deviation from primitive simplicity, dangerous though it might justly seem to the integrity of the Roman faith, was productive of consequences the most momentous to tribes who reverenced principally the pomp and mysterious ceremony attendant on the faith which they embraced,

and would have scorned to bow down before priests or altars whose faultless humility merely recalled the rude shrines of their native forests." Also we learn that "the lavish piety of barbarian sovereigns" directed "the plunder of suffering lands into the capacious coffers of the Church." Although this led to "the most fatal period of clerical corruption," our apologist is yet able to see in it the guiding hand of Providence establishing "the constant grandeur of the ecclesiastical edifice"!

In Central Europe it was by force of arms that Charlemagne succeeded in spreading Christianity. "It cannot be doubted," we are told, "that the conquering hosts of the Franks were far more effective in the conversion of Central Europe than could have been the most self-denying of missionaries, or the most undoubtedly miraculous of Italian relics." This fresh spread took place towards the close of the eighth century. After a hundred years or so for the leaven to work, we should expect to see a distinct advance in morality among both the clergy and the laity. We find, on the contrary, that during the whole of the tenth century the spectacle presented by society was "revolting." "Not only did the clerical body present sure tokens of that gigantic cancer which was wasting the energies of the Church, but their degeneracy was relieved by nothing that was noble or praiseworthy among the laity."

P. 315, lines 3–4.—*The Rationalistic explanation of that essence of the "religious instinct," belief in an after-life.*

"Eternity is at best but an artificial idea; in reality, it is no true idea at all, since we cannot conceive it; it is only the negation of an idea, being, in fact, the negation of that which passes away. When we begin discussing eternity we see that, from the point of view of natural science, nothing is eternal except the ultimate particles of matter and their forces; for no one of the thousandfold phenomena and combinations under which matter and force present themselves to us can be eternal" (*Weismann on Heredity*, vol. ii., p. 74 [Oxford, Clarendon Press, 1892]).

CHAPTER VIII.

P. 331, lines 15–16.—*A kind of undefined, but nevertheless potent and serviceable, religion.*

The Rev. Henry Scott Jeffreys, of Sendai, contributed a paper, entitled "Some of the Native Virtues of the Japanese People," to the *Japan Evangelist*. The following are some, out of many, exceedingly significant admissions:—"After seven years' residence among this people, I wish to place on record my humble testimony to their *native* virtues. I refer to virtues that belong to the Japanese people without reference to their faith. In this connection it may be said that perhaps the most remarkable part is their devotion to ethics alone, utterly divorced from religion. They love virtue for its own sake, and not from fear of punishment or hope of reward.....They have eliminated from their system of ethics not only heaven and hell, but God also.....To be sure, there are religions (so-called), both native and foreign; but they have little effect upon the popular conscience.....The conversion of this people to the Christian faith is

a most complex and perplexing problem; not because they are so bad, but because they are so good."

P. 334, lines 29-31.—*Crime and bad lives will be the measure of a State's failure.*

It is customary to scout the idea of State control as the panacea for social evils. One is warned against grandmotherly legislation, interference with the liberty of the private individual, etc. I may be permitted, therefore, to give an illustration of its beneficial effect. The Gothenburg system, by which the liquor traffic is judiciously controlled, has, in spite of all opposition, fought its way victoriously, and is now adopted, although partly modified, in most towns in Sweden, and also in Norway and Finland. Thus the evil effects of drink have been considerably mitigated; intemperance, pauperism, and vice have been reduced. Would not legislation of this nature for the removal of England's greatest curse be far better than half-hearted measures that are palliative rather than remedial? Now that the Church has taken up the temperance cause, could she not bring her great influence to bear towards the introduction of some such system, pitting herself against vested interests? Remarkable work is being carried on by the Danish temperance societies on the basis of allowing their members to regard beer of *low alcoholic strength* as a temperance beverage. Australia has been watching New Zealand in the matter of drink reform, and the Government of New South Wales, at any rate, has found it necessary to fulfil pledges given at the last general election, with the result that, among a certain class, there is an immense diminution in the temptation to drink. Where the nature of the case demands it, more drastic remedies must be applied. Thus Belgium has forbidden the very presence of absinthe within her borders, and in Switzerland—in some of the cantons, at all events—the authorities have made up their minds to prohibit the manufacture and sale of absinthe. Even in China an edict has now been promulgated for the abolition of the use of opium, and an anti-opium movement is spreading which bids fair to embarrass the interested abettor of the vice—a Christian Government.

In their volume, *The Making of the Criminal* (Macmillan & Co.), Messrs. C. E. B. Russell and L. M. Rigby confirm the now generally accepted view that it is, as a rule, between the ages of sixteen and twenty-one that the habitual criminal is made, and show that juvenile crime is a product of the wretched economic, social, and family condition in which so many unhappy children are born and have to live. The criminal is also recruited, as Dr. W. D. Morrison points out (in a review of their book appearing in the *Tribune*, December 12th, 1906), from those whose home and social antecedents may be good enough, but who are themselves either mentally or physically below the average of the general community, and who, therefore, when times are bad, drift insensibly into crime. When to all this unfavourable environment we add an unfavourable heredity, we get a conjunction of circumstances against which it is quite impossible for the unfortunate to contend, even though he be aided by the "gift of freewill" and by all the intercessory prayers of the Churches. The Borstal system and other remedies recommended in *The Making of the Criminal* are

excellent in their way, but can be regarded only as palliatives. They deal with the criminal after he has been made. What is wanted is, to quote Dr. Morrison, "a wise and progressive statesmanship which will cut off crime at its roots—a statesmanship which will devote itself with care and foresight to ameliorating the whole material and moral conditions of existence of the workman, the woman, and the child." And this statesmanship will take an enlightened view of the population question, recognising that it is in the diminution of the struggle for existence, not in the rise of the birth-rate, that the material and moral condition of the people can be ameliorated.

P. 336, note.—*Psychical research will lead to the discovery of a complete and scientific method for the toughening of our moral fibres.*

A quarter of a century ago Proctor remarked (see pp. 203–4 of his essays, *Rough Ways Made Smooth*) that the phenomena of hypnotism "promise to afford valuable means of curing certain ailments, and of influencing in useful ways certain powers and functions of the body." He recognised "possibilities which, duly developed, might be found of extreme value to the human race." Since these words were uttered this branch of science has not stood still, and there seems every prospect that his prophecy will be fulfilled in the near future. There are now cliniques for hypnotic treatment in France (Dr. Bérillon's in Paris, for example), Germany, Belgium, Sweden, Holland, Switzerland, and America. "The commencement of the present revival of hypnotism in England, from its medical side, was apparently due to Dr. Lloyd Tuckey, who happened to be in the neighbourhood of Nancy in August, 1888, and visited Liébeault out of curiosity" (see p. 35 of Dr. Milne Bramwell's *Hypnotism: Its History, Practice, and Theory* [Alexander Moring, Hanover Square, London; 2nd ed., 1906]).

The following are some of the facts about the matter which should be clearly understood and widely made known:—

(1) "The object of all hypnotic treatment ought to be the development of the patient's control of his own organism" (see p. 436 of *Hypnotism: Its History, Practice, and Theory*).

(2) The hypnotic control may be obtained without any effort on the part of the operator, the effort formerly supposed to be required being purely imaginary, and the hypnotic state being, in fact, obtained without any operation whatever. Indeed, it has now been found that for curative purposes the "suggestion" may be conveyed without throwing the patient into the hypnotic condition, and that anyone not absolutely an idiot or insane may be amenable to the treatment.

(3) "Both 'Scientist' [the author is speaking of Christian Scientists] and Suggestionist also use the same method for creating belief—namely, Assertion.....Assertions are not made clumsily, ignorantly, and at random, as assertions are in our daily intercourse, but are made skilfully, with a purpose, and with a knowledge of the effects they will produce" (see p. 9 of the late Richard Harte's *The New Psychology; or, The Secret of Happiness* [Fowler & Co., London and New York]). Is this one of the reasons why the believer is able to continue a believer in spite of all disproof? Certainly he is constantly

repeating assertions, and sometimes these must get through to his subliminal consciousness—his subjective mind.

(4) *Auto-suggestion.* The suggestion should be made when you are composing yourself to sleep. Dr. Bramwell tells me that the best time is on first waking in the morning, before dozing off again.

(5) "Many cases of functional nervous disorder have recovered under hypnotic treatment after the continued failure of other methods. ....Further, the diseases which frequently respond to hypnotic treatment are often those in which drugs are of little or no avail. For example, what medicine would one prescribe for a man who, in the midst of mental and physical health, had suddenly become the prey of an obsession?" (see p. 435 of *Hypnotism: Its History, Practice, and Theory*).

(6) "*The volition is increased and the moral standard raised*" (see p. 437 of *Hypnotism*, etc.). "Experience proves that 'principles' instilled into anyone while in the hypnotic condition become irrevocably [?] fixed in the mind" (p. 3 of Richard Harte's *Hypnotism and the Doctors*). Thus degenerates, dipsomaniacs, morphinomaniacs, kleptomaniacs, sexual perverts, and other unfortunates, may be reclaimed.

(7) "'Suggestion' is of universal application, and of incalculable power for good in almost every department of human life.....The three principal ways in which suggestion (which has been called 'the active principle' of hypnotism) affects human beings beneficially, in addition to curing diseases, are: By facilitating education; by preventing crime, and reforming the criminal; and by raising the general standard of manliness—of courage, of independence of character, and of respect for self and others" (*ibid*, pp. 2–4).

*Note.*—"The Medical Society for the Study of Suggestive Therapeutics" was constituted at the close of 1906. Let us hope that it will soon rival the flourishing French *Société d'Hypnotisme et de Psychologie.*

P. 337, lines 5–6.—*It is the quality, not the quantity, of our children that we have to keep to the forefront.*

"This is the great problem in a nutshell: to improve the quality and diminish the quantity of mankind—that is, in proportion to the means of securing for each a truly human life." "Is not the quality rather than the quantity of children the thing to be aimed at?" (Mona Caird and Lady Grove on "The Position of Women," see pp. 118 and 128 of the *Fortnightly Review* for July, 1905). Besides, "if we continued to maintain the high birth-rate of the mid-Victorian epoch, it is certain that, in the course of a few generations, there would be no elbow-room left in our little islands. Already, indeed, Great Britain is, from many points of view, over-populated. If all the people who are now crowded together in the slums of our great towns were scattered over the country, there would be practically no country left. England would have become a vast suburb. That is not an ideal to which any patriotic Englishman would care to look forward. Space and quiet are essential for the development of some of the best qualities of human beings, and those persons who too hastily regret a decline in the birth-rate must explain how they propose to reconcile these essentials with an unlimited increase of our present population"

(*The Daily Graphic*, August 7th, 1905, art. "A Declining Birth-rate").

Over-population spells strife, squalor, vice, crime—misery. Dr. Barnardos and "General" Booths may get over the "unemployed" difficulty by schemes for emigration to Canada and elsewhere; but this is, at best, only a very temporary remedy. As it is, thousands of white men are living *and dying* in climates for which they are unadapted; while in some cases—in certain portions of Africa, for example—they are ousting and making life a burthen to the races that are adapted. We have only to look far enough ahead to discover that the time must come when the world would so teem with humankind that even a Bishop of London or a President Roosevelt would have to cry "Hold! Enough!"

At the present moment this problem presses for a very early solution in India. For many months in the year, as I have again and again seen with my own eyes, masses of the agricultural population are entirely without employment. Hence the constantly recurring famines, or partial famines, in years of bad or indifferent rainfall. The population problem, being intimately connected with many another problem, is one of the utmost gravity; but, so long as men hold that to increase and multiply is the command of God and a duty we owe to the State, it will never be rightly, never be sensibly, solved. P.S.—Millions are starving in China now (February, 1907).

P. 345, line 3.—*The Moral Instruction League.*

The object of the Moral Instruction League (19, Buckingham Street, Strand, London, W.C.) is to introduce systematic non-theological moral instruction into all schools, and to make the formation of character the chief aim of school life. Their contention is—and it seems a wise one—that ethical principles on which we all agree should not be associated in the schools of the State with theological principles on which we all differ. Already certain education authorities are providing for systematic moral instruction of a purely secular nature. In the West Riding scheme it is expressly stated that it is to be "part of the *secular* instruction," while the Cheshire scheme emphatically lays down that the moral instruction must be non-theological. The authorities of Gorton, Blackpool, Norwich, York, and elsewhere, have supplied all the teachers of their schools with copies of the Moral Instruction League's *Graduated Syllabus of Moral Instruction for Elementary Schools.* The West Riding Education Authority has adopted the Syllabus, and it is now in use in the 1,270 schools, Provided and Non-Provided, of that authority. In addition to these, numerous education authorities have decided to make provision for moral instruction a part of the *secular* instruction in their schools.

So much that is untrue has been said about the results of a purely secular education by its strenuous opponents that it is high time for the real truth to be known. This my readers will find in Mr. Joseph McCabe's tractate, *The Truth About Secular Education: Its History and Results* (Watts & Co., 1906, paper covers, 6d.).

Among some excellent works intended to assist parents and teachers in the non-theological character-training of children, I may mention

F. J. Gould's *The Children's Book of Moral Lessons*, in three series (Watts & Co.), Hackwood's *Notes of Lessons on Moral Subjects*, Alice Chesterton's *The Garden of Childhood* (Sonnenschein), Dr. Felix Adler's *The Moral Instruction of Children* (Edward Arnold), the Moral Instruction League and also the Leicester *Syllabus*, and A. J. Waldegrave's *A Teacher's Handbook of Moral Lessons* (Sonnenschein). Dr. F. H. Hayward's *Secret of Herbart*, a powerful appeal to the teacher on the scope and urgency of his moral mission, is now re-issued at 6d. (Watts). The translation of Dr. F. W. Förster's *Lebenskunde*, a book replete with illustrative matter for the teacher, has been undertaken by the Moral Instruction League. Mr. W. M. Salter's essay, "Why Live a Moral Life?" is of exceptional merit. This and other ethical essays may be obtained from the Secretary of the Union of Ethical Societies, 19, Buckingham Street, Strand, W.C.; price one penny each. One of the most important contributions to ethical sociology that has appeared for many years is a work in two vols. entitled *Morals in Evolution* (Chapman & Hall; 1906), by Mr. L. T. Hobhouse. I venture to predict that it will ere long be recognised as the standard work on the subject. Mr. Hobhouse, it should be noted, never wavers in his assertion of the supremacy of ethics over all phases of religion.

P. 350, line 15.—*The practices of the Latin and Greek Churches.*

Diaries recounting the sights seen by a lord of high degree in 1465 were published in 1851 by the Literary Society of Stuttgart. They include an interesting account of all the shrines and relics seen during his travels through Western Europe. The account of the relics which he saw in our own Canterbury Cathedral admits of no curtailment: "First we saw the head-band of the Blessed Virgin, a piece of Christ's garment, and three thorns from His Crown; then we saw the bedstead of St. Thomas and his brain, and the blood of St. Thomas and of St. John the Apostles. We saw also the sword with which St. Thomas of Canterbury was beheaded; the hair of the Mother of God, and a part of the Sepulchre. There was also shown to us a part of the shoulder of the Blessed Simeon, who bore Christ in his arms; the head of the blessed Lustrabena; one leg of St. George; a piece of the body and the bones of St. Lawrence; a leg of the Bishop of St. Romanus; a cup of St. Thomas, which he had been accustomed to use in administering the Sacrament at Canterbury; a leg of the Virgin Milda; a leg of the Virgin Eduarda. We also saw a tooth and a finger of St. Stephen the Martyr; bones of the Virgin Catherine, and oil from her sepulchre, which is said to flow to this day; hair of the blessed Virgin [*sic!*] Magdalene; a tooth of St. Benedict; a finger of St. Urban; the lips of one of the infants slain by Herod; bones of the blessed Clement; bones of St. Vincent. Very many other things were also shown to us, which are not set down by me in this place." Very many other things have also been shown to me during my travels abroad (from St. Anne de Beaupré in Quebec to the Church of the Holy Sepulchre in Jerusalem) which are not set down by me in this place, and I may say that the grotesqueness of the frauds that are perpetrated is only equalled by the gross ignorance and credulity of the worshippers. The number of these "relics" scattered over

Christendom must amount to thousands upon thousands. To stop the traffic in them, there is now a regulation that if you buy a relic you commit mortal sin. The relics are still sold, however; only the price is said to be for the frame or for the trouble, or something to that effect. For a description of *La Bottega del Papa* (the Pope's shop) or *La Santa Bottega* (the Holy Shop) see Dr. Robertson's book, *The Roman Catholic Church in Italy*. Regarding the early Church, see *Bible Myths*, pp. 434–40.

P. 359, lines 7–10.—*Some of our greatest divines....condemn obscurantism and the odium theologicum.*

We have a striking example of this in Dean Farrar's tractate, *The Bible and the Child* (James Clarke & Co., 1897). The passage runs as follows: "There are a certain number of persons who, when their minds have become stereotyped in foregone conclusions, are simply *incapable* of grasping new truths. They become obstructionists, and not infrequently bigoted obstructionists. As convinced as the Pope of their own personal infallibility, their attitude towards those who see that the old views are no longer tenable is an attitude of anger and alarm. This is the usual temper of the *odium theologicum*. It would, if it could, grasp the thumbscrew and the rack of mediæval Inquisitors, and would, in the last resource, hand over all opponents to the scaffold or the stake. Those whose intellects have been thus petrified by custom and advancing years are, of all others, the most hopeless to deal with. They have made themselves incapable of fair and rational examination of the truths which they impugn. They think they can, by mere assertion, overthrow results arrived at by the life-long inquiries of the ablest student, while they have not given a day's serious or impartial study to them. They fancy that even the ignorant, if only they be what is called orthodox, are justified in strong denunciation of men quite as truthful, and often incomparably more able than themselves. Off-hand dogmatists of this stamp, who usually abound among professional religionists, think that they can refute any number of scholars, however profound and however pious, if only they shout 'Infidel' with sufficient loudness."

P. 367, lines 21–2.—*Did not slavery flourish side by side with the Christian Church?*

Serfdom in England was fully extinguished only in 1600, and the Act for the Abolition of Slavery throughout the British Colonies was passed only in 1833. For eighteen long centuries Christianity countenanced the atrocious inhumanities of the slave trade. The very irons used by the native chiefs for shackling the prisoners when handing them over to the Christian traders were made in Birmingham, and the greatest horrors of slavery have been exhibited only under the rule of the Christian slave-owner. We can form some idea of the inhumanity then displayed from the treatment of the coloured races by the white man in Africa to-day. Read, for instance, the accounts of the Congo atrocities, or of the German Colonial scandals. Read, again, some home-truths about our own Colonies in *Labour and other Questions in South Africa*, by Medicus (T. Fisher Unwin, 1903). The white man has indeed a burden to bear—the burden of his own iniquity. Regarding negro slavery, Dr. Westermarck clearly shows

(in his work, *The Origin and Development of the Moral Ideas*) that "this system of slavery, which, at least in the British Colonies and the slave States, surpassed in cruelty the slavery of any pagan country, ancient or modern, was not only recognised by Christian Governments, but was supported by the large bulk of the clergy, Catholic and Protestant alike."

P. 368, lines 25–8.—*The Christian Church has been more cruel and shed more human blood than any other Church or institution in the world. Let the Jew bear witness among the crowd of victims.*

History is repeating itself to-day, and my previous allusions to the present situation in Russia are all too brief. I would ask my readers kindly to put to themselves the following crucial questions: To what party do the religious bigots and their partisans belong? Is it not to the reactionary party, the party that sets its face against reform? On what do the reactionaries chiefly rely for the retention of their hold upon the bulk of the people? Is it not on a peasantry wallowing in ignorance and steeped in superstition? What are the actual instruments employed for maintaining their power? Do they not consist of corrupt officials and cruel Cossacks? Who are responsible for shameless acts of persecution, and, indeed, very largely for all the bloodshed, strife, and anarchy? Is it not the orthodox Church and her supporters? Is it too much to say, with the Rev. J. Lawson-Forster, that "the Russian Church has become the tool of murderers"? (Mr. Lawson-Forster expressed himself in these words when presiding at the great public meeting held at the Brondesbury Synagogue to protest against the recent outrages in Russia.) To what party do the Freethinkers belong? Are they not all, everyone of them, adherents of the party desirous of reform and of religious toleration? With regard to religious persecution generally, Christians might study with advantage Buckle's *History of Civilisation in England*, or Lecky's *History of the Rise and Influence of the Spirit of Rationalism in Europe*, or C. T. Gorham's *Faith: Its Freaks and Follies* (Rationalist Press Association), or the latest work on the subject, *Religious Persecution*, by E. S. P. Haynes (Duckworth; a revised edition has now been issued by the R. P. A. at 6d.). Few realise that the favourite method for overcoming the scruples of the heretic—torture—was used in England so late as 1640.

Pp. 371–2, lines 31 and 1–3.—*History, viewed as a whole, is nothing but a succession of struggles for existence among rival nations.*

If Major Murray had stopped short at offering us a somewhat highly coloured picture of the past and present conditions ruling among Christian nations, and at inculcating the necessity of our being in readiness to face the inevitable, few of us would be found to quarrel, in the main, with his conclusions. But when he tells us that "Peace never has been, and *never will be* [italics are mine], as long as the passions of mankind endure, more than a lull between the storms of war," then the better-informed and peace-loving Rationalist will beg to differ with him. He feels that this gospel of universal hatred is being carried too far. Never is a very long time. Major Murray says: "No great nation will ever submit to arbitration any interest that it regards as absolutely vital." Did not our British forefathers

think, and with more reason, that "men of honour" could settle their disputes only by the duel? May we not trust that the decisions of learned and unbiassed judges will be equitable, and therefore that their acceptance will redound to the honour of the great nations concerned?

Natural selection, or, as we have elsewhere called it, natural murder, ceased to have full power over men on the day that man commenced to control his environment. Since then he has been constantly engaged in making nature do some work for him, in altering the environment in which he finds himself *instead of letting it alter him.* Now that he is equipped, better than ever before in his history, for this task, now that he has learnt more of the secrets of Nature—of her crude and cruel processes—is he going to acquiesce tamely, and make no use of his knowledge? Now the nature of the malady has been diagnosed, and now the proper remedies have been discovered, will he not set about the cure? Is the struggle for existence, with all its attendant horrors, to be perpetuated? Does the end—the survival of the fittest—justify the means—over-production and murder? Cannot the same and better results be attained by a process less crude, less cruel? Nature procures adaptation to existing environment by methods fraught with untold suffering for the sentient, and the obvious course is for man to reverse the process, bringing the environment into harmony with his existing constitution. Of a truth, nature is, as Major Murray reminds us, red in tooth and claw; but science is both able and willing to tame the shrew.

P. 374, lines 15–19.—*The "Lord mighty in battle" is expected to take interest in bloodshed....to fight for his people.*

A parody appearing in an evening paper on November 29th, 1901, conveys a wholesome lesson on this subject. "Lest we forget," I quote it at length:—

PROCESSIONAL.

Lord God of Battles, whom we seek
  On clouds and tempests throned afar,
When tired of being tamely weak,
  We Maffick into deadly war;
If it should chance to be a sin,
At least enable us to win.

Give to the Churches faith to pray
  For what they know they shouldn't ask,
And such abounding grace that they
  May cheerfully perform the task;
Wave flags and loyally discount
That fatal Sermon on the Mount.

Give to the people strength to be
  Convinced all happens for the best,
To see the thing they wish to see,
  And prudently ignore the rest;
So priest and people shall combine
To gain their ends, and call them Thine

P. 374, lines 23–4.—*Its* [Christianity's] *impotency to carry out this, one of its chief missions.*

"In no field of its work," exclaims Mr. Andrew Carnegie, "does the Christian Church throughout the whole world—with outstanding individual exceptions—so conspicuously fail as in its attitude to war. Its silence when outspoken speech might avert war, its silence during war's sway, its failure during days of peace to proclaim the true Christian doctrines regarding the killing of men, give point to the recent arraignment of the Prime Minister, who declared that the Church to-day busied itself with questions [*e.g.*, of vestments and candles] which did not weigh even as dust in the balance compared with the vital problems with which it was called upon to deal." (See reports of the ceremony at which Mr. Carnegie was installed as Rector of St. Andrew's University.)

P. 374 lines 24–5.—*Religion being frequently the actual occasion of, the strife.*

From the Crusades to the Crimea, religion has continually been either directly or indirectly the cause of war. Protestants, who may be ready to excuse the wars undertaken to drive the infidels from the "Holy Land," will do well to remember that Pope Innocent III., besides proclaiming the fifth of these crusades, proclaimed also the infamous crusade against the Albigenses (*who opposed the corruptions of the Church of Rome*), when Simon de Montfort and the Pope's legate, at the head of half a million of men, put to the sword friend and foe, men and women, saying, "God will find his own." In the case of that mischievous and unnecessary blunder, the Crimean War, the great masses of the Russian people saw but a spirited defence of the Cross against the Crescent, wherein, from their point of view, the infidel was being supported by renegade Christians. It was an appeal to the religious emotions of the Russian peasants—an insincere appeal, as history has discovered—that lent to the last Russo-Turkish war a fictitious popularity.

P. 375, lines 6–7.—*Every Rationalist, every Freethinker, is an honest advocate of peace.*

Note these lines by an eminent divine and great dignitary of the Church, Archbishop Alexander, of Armagh:—

> And when I know how noble natures form under the red rain of war, I deem it true
> That He who made the earthquakes and the storm perchance made battle too.

And these by the gentle Wordsworth, the poet of sweet simplicity:—

> But Thy most dreaded instrument
> In working out a pure intent
> Is man—array'd for mutual slaughter;
> Yea, Carnage is Thy daughter!

And compare: "The very ideas and efforts which have led men to struggle against the Papal Church are exactly those which are exorcising the demon of militarism from the soul of France" (*Contemporary Review* for January, 1905, art. "France and Rome").  Or again the

following, reported in the daily papers: "A petition to stop the war between Russia and Japan owes its inception to Signor Carlo Romissi, Deputy and editor of the *Secolo* of Milan. The petition has penetrated into every workshop, household, and school, and roused the people to a passionate desire for peace, not only between the belligerents in the Far East, but between all nations." The *Secolo* is the most widely-read Freethought paper in Italy.

Though it may be a long time before our efforts are rewarded, is that any reason for not making a commencement in the right direction? Let me give an instance. The effort now being made to popularise the international language "Esperanto" is one such commencement. Could not the Church spare a little of her military ardour (exhibited in the arm-chair and pulpit) for supporting peaceful projects of this nature? This one, at any rate, among the many to be found on the Rationalist programme, is not contrary to her teaching; but I have not as yet heard of any ecclesiastical support to a scheme that will undoubtedly conduce to a better acquaintance between the peoples of different nationalities. It is Rationalist and liberal-minded philanthropists (Mr. W. T. Stead, *e.g.*) who are at present chiefly interested in the movement.

During the Boer War one was continually hearing declamations from the pulpit to the effect that war is a necessary evil. For instance, the late Bishop of Calcutta, Dr. Welldon, actually advocated war on the ground that it was a means of keeping a nation virile. Has the Boer War made us more virile? Whatever Imperial necessity there may have been for it, owing to blunders in the past and the existing condition of affairs, the certain effects of it, so far as we can see, have been the untimely destruction of some of the flower of our race, sorrow spread throughout the length and breadth of the land by many bereavements, the burden of a great debt, and the unemployed question rendered more acute than ever.

"The brotherhood of man is a long way off—it may never be reached; but as an ideal it is better worth having than that of half-a-dozen sullen empires, trading only within their own boundaries, and shut up behind high tariff walls over which they peer suspiciously, scanning one another's exports and imports with jealous eyes, and making from time to time fawning alliances with one rival, while harbouring enmity with another, maintaining millions of men under arms and spending millions of pounds in armaments, and all the time waiting, waiting, waiting for an affrighted sun to rise upon the day of Armageddon.....But nobler things lie before us and a brighter dawn." (See Mr. Birrell's article, "Patriotism and Christianity," in the *Contemporary Review* for February, 1905.)

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